



THE Hans India



Nationwide shutdown looms over VB-G RAM G
Demanding the repeal of the proposed Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission - Gramin (VB-G RAM G), activists and workers' organisations on Wednesday announced protests against the new scheme from July 1. **P106**

Fasting across religious faiths
In the Vedas 'vrata's or 'nomu's are religious rituals, vows, or observances aimed at fulfilling a desire, seeking blessings, ensuring family welfare, to attain specific goals such as health, wealth, prosperity or overcoming adversity. **P6**

Resilient India posts all-time high \$863 bn exports in FY26
India's exports reached a record \$863 billion in FY2025-26, demonstrating resilience despite disruptions caused by the West Asia conflict and US tariffs, a senior Commerce Ministry official said on Wednesday. **P11**

Pragma Jaiswal's photoshoot gains traction
Actress Pragma Jaiswal continues to command attention on social media despite not having a film release scheduled this year. The actress, known for her elegant fashion choices and strong online presence, has once again become the center of discussion. **P12**

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KEEP HORMUZ OPEN: MODI

Raises safety of seafarers with Trump at G7 Summit

EVIAN-LES-BAINS

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged US President Donald Trump to ensure the safety of seafarers and maintain freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, highlighting India's dependence on the strategically vital maritime route amid efforts to secure a peace agreement with Iran.

During a bilateral meeting with Trump on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in France, Modi said the reopening and protection of the Strait of Hormuz was crucial not only for regional stability but also for the global economy. "You and I agree that keeping the Strait of Hormuz open is vital for the global economy," Modi said, stressing that India has consistently advocated unrestricted maritime movement.

Modi and Trump held wide-ranging talks focusing on the proposed bilateral trade deal, bilateral defence and security ties and the West Asia crisis.

"Lakhs of Indian seafarers operate in maritime sector; I believe that their security is equally important," PM Modi told President Trump. India lost 3 Indian seafarers in an



US President Donald Trump with PM Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Evian-les-Bains, France, on Wednesday

attack by US Navy last well at MT Settebello. Two more vessels with Indian crew on board were also attacked in the same week. Modi thanked President Trump for his efforts to restore peace in West Asia and expressed hope for a lasting resolution to the conflict. "We have always said that there should

be freedom of navigation... Lakhs of Indian seafarers operate in the maritime trade sector. I believe that their security is equally important. I am confident that the deal (with Iran) will have provisions for the security of the seafarers," Modi said in his media comments.

DON'S BIG PROMISE

'IF INDIA IS ATTACKED, WE WILL BE THERE FOR MODI'

Says Trump on defence ties with India

EVIAN-LES-BAINS: While commenting on the defence relationship between the United States and India, US President Donald Trump said even though the countries do not have a formal defence agreement, Washington would be there for New Delhi. Answering a question about defence ties, Trump said, "I think it's a great relationship.

'A TOTAL KILLER, A TOUGH TRADER'

Trump all praise for PM at G7 bilateral

EVIAN-LES-BAINS: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday showered praise on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in France's Evian on the sidelines of the G7 Summit 2026. Assigning adjectives like "a killer and a tough trader" to PM Modi, Trump said he has immense respect for the leader. "He's a very tough



negotiator... You look at this man. I'll give you a lesson. He's the most beautiful-looking man. He looks so nice, like an angel. But actually, he's as tough as a killer... But he looks so good. So he gets you by surprise. There are a few people like this," Trump said as the two leaders held a bilateral meeting in France.



'We're the most famous couple'

MELONI TELLS PM MODI AT G7 SUMMIT

EVIAN-LES-BAINS

LEADERS of the Group of Seven (G7) gathered in France's Evian-les-Bains on Tuesday to discuss key global challenges, reaffirm their support for Ukraine, and welcome

the breakthrough deal between the US and Iran. Amid this serious event, a brief interaction between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni has caught all the attention on social media,

with the 'Melodi' buzz making a return. A viral video shows PM Modi and Meloni greeting each other and shaking hands moments before lining up for a group photo with other leaders, including US President Donald Trump. While the

audio isn't very clear, PM Modi appeared to refer to their popularity on social media to Meloni. To this, the Italian Prime Minister said, "Yes, we are the most famous couple on Instagram".

This came nearly a month after PM Modi, during his trip to Rome, gifted Meloni a packet of Parle's Melody toffee - in reference to the viral 'Melodi' term.

WINDOWS

India, EU agree to sign FTA by year-end

EVIAN-LES-BAINS: India and the European Union will sign the ambitious free trade agreement

by the end of this year, top EU leader Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday after holding talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi that largely focused on boosting two-way economic engagement against the backdrop of a fragile geopolitical environment. In the meeting, held on the sidelines of the G7 summit in this French commune, the two sides also resolved to step up security and defence cooperation. Besides Von der Leyen, the President of the EU Commission, the meeting was joined by European Council President Antonio Costa.

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CJP seeks Delhi Police nod for June 20 protest

NEW DELHI: The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Wednesday said it sought the Delhi Police's permission for a protest at Jantar Mantar on June 20 and expressed confidence that its request would be approved.

In a statement, the party said it had completed all formalities required by the police and submitted details of the proposed protest, including the number of volunteers and other logistical arrangements.

Earlier, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke had announced that they would start an indefinite sit-in at Jantar Mantar from June 20 until Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigns.

"We have formally intimated the Delhi Police of a peaceful demonstration and dharna at Jantar Mantar on June 20, 2026. Delhi Police has said they will get back to us tomorrow morning. We are confident that the police will grant permission," CJP spokesperson Saurav Das said in the statement.

In a video statement after meeting police officers, Das said he spent the day at the Parliament Street police station completing procedural requirements related to the proposed protest.

"I have submitted the entire plan, the number of volunteers required and every other formality as required by the police. We hope that the Delhi Police will cooperate with us," he said.



Telegram moves Delhi HC against govt curbs

Centre claims 'shocking' activities on platform

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to file its reply on Telegram's plea against its order temporarily restricting access to the messaging app ahead of the June 21 NEET-UG 2026 re-examination. As the matter came up before a vacation bench of Justice Tejas Karia, Telegram's counsel claimed the curbs were illegal, but Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta defended the government action, saying the platform was being misused and he would reveal "something shocking" on Thursday. The court adjourned the hearing to Thursday and issued notice to the Centre. During the hearing, Telegram's counsel questioned the legality of the government order blocking the platform.

Uddhav Sena stares at split

6 MPs set to join Shinde camp ■ NDA to get boost in Lok Sabha

MUMBAI

SIX Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs reportedly formed a separate group in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday and submitted a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. The six MPs are expected to join the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena on Friday, the party's foundation day. Sena functionaries said the process of forming the separate group was completed smoothly.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) has nine MPs in the Lok Sabha.



Barring Arvind Sawant, Anil Desai and Rajabhau Waze, all the remaining MPs are understood to have joined the new group. Sena (UBT) MPs Sanjay Raut, Sawant and Desai also met Birla and

urged him not to recognise any separate group formed by defecting Sena (UBT) MPs. However, Sena functionaries claimed that Birla had recognised the group of six MPs as a separate bloc.

SAMAJWADI SPLIT NEXT?

► Claims UP minister
► Akhilesh responds

NEW DELHI: Amid turmoil in TMC and buzz of a brewing split in Shiv Sena (UBT), speculation of a possible split in former Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party (SP) surfaced after state minister OP Rajbhar claimed that the Opposition party could face a major exodus.

DEAL NOT FINAL: TRUMP

Changes tune on Tehran ■ Threatens to drop bombs on Iran

EVIAN-LES-BAINS

JUST as things were looking up for the peace efforts in the Middle East, US President Donald Trump on Wednesday crushed hopes again, with fresh warnings to Iran.

During his remarks at the G7 Summit in France, Trump said that no deal had been finalised with Iran and warned he would resume



"dropping bombs" and go back to shooting if Tehran did not abide by its obligations. Trump clarified that

only a memorandum of understanding was in the works, and that no deal had been finalised. "If I don't like it, we will go back to shooting at them," Trump said, adding: "If they don't behave, we'll go right back to dropping bombs right smack in the middle of their head." He made the remarks sitting alongside Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.



India's defence production surges to Rs 1.78 lakh cr in 2025-26

NEW DELHI: India's annual defence production touched an all-time high of Rs 1.78 lakh crore in the financial year 2025-26, the defence ministry said on Wednesday. The milestone represents a 15.6 per cent growth over the previous fiscal year's output of Rs 1.54 lakh crore and a staggering 110 per cent increase since 2020-21 when the figure was Rs 84,643 crore, it said. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the "remarkable rise" in India's defence production in recent years is the result of the collective efforts of the Department of Defence Production and all other stakeholders. "This upward trajectory is a clear indicator of the country's expanding defence industrial base," he said. "With sustained policy support, several new initiatives, increased private sector participation, and growing export capabilities, the defence production sector is poised for continued acceleration in the years ahead," he said.

Meta starts charging for Insta, FB & WhatsApp

NEW DELHI

Launches a new 'Meta One' subscription brand

META has officially started charging for Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp. Not for the apps themselves, which remain free, but for a new layer of "Plus" features that the company is rolling out globally under a fresh subscription brand called Meta One.

Meta's bet is that enough power users and creators will pay for the extras to make subscriptions a meaningful new revenue line. While that is reasonable maths for a company with three billion users, it is also a signal that the free, ad-supported,

algorithm-driven social feed of the last 15 years is winding down.

Analysts believe that it's an urgent attempt to offset soaring AI costs as Mark Zuckerberg tries to play catch up in the AI space where it is lagging behind. Meta increased its 2026 capital expenditure forecast to an unprecedented \$125 billion - \$145 billion, primarily to fund AI compute infrastructure, data centres, and higher component costs.

Instagram Plus costs \$3.99 a month. Subscribers get story insights showing how many



people rewatched a story, unlimited custom audience lists beyond Close Friends, the ability to spotlight a story for a week, the option to extend a story past 24 hours, a preview mode that lets one to watch

other people's stories without showing up as a viewer, and Super Heart animated reactions. One can also post straight to the profile without it appearing in followers' feeds. While Facebook Plus

is also \$3.99 a month and gives you a similar bundle, focused on profile customisation, reactions and analytics, WhatsApp Plus is cheaper at \$2.99. "It is not about social expression. It is about personalising the messaging app: custom themes, ring-tones, more pinned chats, list customisation and premium stickers," say the experts.

Then there is the AI tier. Meta is testing Meta One Plus at \$7.99 and Meta One Premium at \$19.99 for heavier Meta AI users. The Premium plan unlocks deeper reasoning

on complex tasks and more image and video generation across Meta's apps. Free Meta AI access remains but with usage limits. These plans start testing next month in Singapore, Guatemala and Bolivia.

For creators and businesses, Meta One Essential at \$14.99 bundles the Verified badge, impersonation protection and an enhanced linksheet. The top tier, Meta One Advanced at \$49.99, promises higher placement in Facebook and Instagram search, a bolder Follow button on Reels, automatic follow invitations, deeper competitive analytics and team access controls.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

Competitive exams may soon come with a nationwide lockdown

IN BRIEF



Prakash Raj breaks silence on Dharmasthala row

BENGALURU: Multi-lingual actor Prakash Raj on Wednesday said C N Chinniah—who had made allegations of “multiple murders, rapes and burials” in the temple town of Dharmasthala—had spoken to him over the phone and sent him information through an audio recording, which he promptly shared with the SIT chief probing the case. Addressing a press conference, Raj said Chinniah had contacted him seeking to share information. The clarification from the actor came in the wake of Chinniah’s recent writ petition to the High Court, which claims a conspiracy involving monetary supplies aimed at defaming Dharmasthala and mentions Raj’s name. Raj said he received a call from activist Girish Mattannavar, stating that Chinniah wanted to speak to him. According to Raj, Chinniah, who spoke in Tamil over the phone, wanted to meet him personally, but he declined, saying he was not a police officer. When Chinniah insisted, he asked him to record whatever information he had and send it across. “As a citizen, what should I do? I got information from a fellow whom everybody is speculating about. Immediately, I contacted SIT chief Pronab Mohanty,” Raj said. The actor said he later met the SIT chief and handed over the recording sent to him by Chinniah. “The SIT chief said, ‘Thank you, Prakash, this is good evidence. If you get any further information, let me know,’” Raj claimed. When the actor followed up with the SIT subsequently, he was informed that certain aspects of Chinniah’s claims did not tally and that Chinniah was changing his version. “After that, I ended the matter,” he said. Referring to reports about Rs 200 crore mentioned in Chinniah’s writ petition, Raj said the public had a right to know whether he had spoken to Chinniah and what information had been shared.

Udupi man loses Rs 2.12 lakh to debit card fraud

UDUPI: A man in Udupi lost Rs 2.12 lakh from his bank account through cyber fraud after using his debit card at a hospital. He had paid his hospital bill using the card on June 3 and made no further transactions. On June 8, he received an SMS alert about money being debited from his account, prompting him to check the details. Upon verification at the bank, it emerged that between June 5 and June 8, fraudsters had transferred Rs. 2.12 lakh to an unknown account without his knowledge or consent. The victim immediately approached Udupi Town Police Station and lodged a complaint. Police have registered a case under Section 66(D) of the Information Technology Act and initiated an investigation into the matter.

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

STRESSING the importance of listening as a key life skill, Karnataka Lokayukta Justice B.S. Patil urged students to become good listeners to achieve success and build a meaningful future. He observed that one of the greatest challenges in modern society is that people have forgotten how to listen attentively.

Justice Patil was speak-

ing after conferring degrees upon graduating students at the 24th Graduation Ceremony of Vemana Institute of Technology, organized by the Karnataka Reddy Jana Sangha in Koramangala, Bengaluru.

Addressing the graduates, he said listening is an art that requires patience and concentration, even when one’s mind is occupied with multiple thoughts. According to him, attentive listening enhances thinking ability,

broadens perspectives, and contributes significantly to intellectual and personal development.

Encouraging students to pursue their careers with enthusiasm and determination, Justice Patil emphasized the importance of creativity, innovation, and continuous learning in today’s competitive world. He advised students to chart their own course in life and work towards clearly defined goals. “You must design your

own future. Prepare a road-map for your life and move forward with purpose. Every individual should strive for excellence and remain committed to learning throughout life,” he said. Speaking on the occasion, Karnataka Reddy Jana Sangha President D.N. Lakshman Reddy described graduation as a significant milestone and expressed confidence that the degree would serve as a strong foundation for students’ future achievements.



500-yr-old Madhukeshwara temple restoration begins after public outrage

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KARWAR

THE historic Madhukeshwara Temple at Banavasi in Uttara Kannada district, regarded as a symbol of Kannada heritage and cultural identity, has finally begun undergoing restoration works after years of neglect and mounting public pressure. The temple, which boasts a history of nearly 1,500 years and attracts devotees from across Karnataka and neighbouring states, had been facing severe water leakage issues for the past several years.

The deteriorating condition of the ancient structure had sparked widespread anger among devotees and local residents, who accused the Archaeological Department of ignoring repeated appeals for repairs. The issue had gained significant attention after locals threatened to launch a semi-nude protest against



the authorities for their alleged apathy.

For the last two years, temporary arrangements such as tarpaulin sheets had been installed to prevent rainwater from entering the temple premises. However, devotees argued that such makeshift measures not only failed to solve the problem but also diminished the architectural beauty of the centuries-old monument.

Following sustained public pressure, the Archaeological Department has now initiated waterproofing and

protective painting works aimed at preventing further leakage. Residents hope the latest restoration effort will finally provide a permanent solution to the recurring problem.

The Madhukeshwara Temple is considered one of the oldest examples of temple architecture in South India.

Earlier attempts to address the leakage issue included the application of chemical treatments and the installation of metal sheet coverings. However, neither measure proved effective in the long run.

Festival politics heats up as BJP MLA announces schedule

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KOPPAL

A political controversy has erupted in Koppal district after BJP MLA Gali Janardhana Reddy announced that the prestigious Anegondi Utsav would be held in October, even before the district administration officially declared the festival dates.

The announcement has triggered sharp reactions from political circles, with ruling party leaders and officials questioning the propriety of a public representative announcing the schedule of a government-sponsored cultural event ahead of an official notification. The development has intensified discussions over the administration’s role in organizing one of the district’s most significant cultural celebrations.

Anegondi, known for its rich historical and cultural heritage linked to the Vijayanagara Empire, hosts the annual festival to showcase the region’s history, traditions and tourism potential. However, this year’s preparations have become entangled in political



debate. Janardhana Reddy has stated that Rs 3 crore has already been sanctioned for the event and that he has sought an additional Rs 3 crore grant to conduct the festival on a grand scale.

While the district administration is yet to make any formal announcement regarding the dates, Reddy’s declaration has effectively set the political agenda surrounding the event.

The issue has gained further attention because the administration has not yet finalized the festival schedule. Political observers believe the controversy reflects an emerging battle for credit over cultural and development initiatives in the district. Local residents and cul-

tural enthusiasts have urged both political leaders and government officials to keep politics away from heritage events and focus on ensuring the successful conduct of the festival. Many argue that Anegondi Utsav is an important platform for promoting the region’s history, tourism and local economy and should not become a subject of political rivalry.

As the debate continues, all eyes are now on the district administration and the state government for an official announcement regarding the festival schedule. Until then, the controversy surrounding the Anegondi Utsav is expected to remain a major talking point in Koppal’s political landscape.

GREEN CAUSE



A woman worker fills soil into plastic grow bags for raising saplings at a nursery in Chikkamagaluru district on Wednesday

Pompano fish raised in specialised cages in Mangaluru

Premium pricing of fish signals strong future for mariculture

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MANGALURU

A group of fish farmers working under a special development scheme in the Mangaluru region recently completed their first collection of Pompano fish raised in cages. The setup, backed by experts from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, began with the introduction of six thousand young pompano into the enclosures located in suitable coastal waters.

When a portion of the stock reached marketable size, it was harvested and sold, fetching Rs. 400 for every kilogram. This price point has generated considerable enthusiasm among those involved, as it validates the effort invested in adopting modern rearing techniques.

On the day of the harvest, teams sorted through the silvery fish, organising them efficiently near the water’s edge.

The collaborative effort between local families and technical staff ensured the catch was prepared promptly for buyers. Such cage systems provide a controlled environment that supports consistent growth and reduces risks associated with open-water fishing methods.

The initiative forms part of efforts to equip scheduled caste communities with practi-



cal skills in mariculture, opening pathways to diversified earnings. As the remaining fish mature in the cages, expectations rise for subsequent harvests that could further strengthen household finances.

Broader adoption of these methods across similar coastal zones might contribute to increased domestic fish supply while promoting environmentally considerate practices. The positive market response encourages continued investment in training and infrastructure for similar ventures.

Cong MLA terms corruption allegations against him as ‘politically motivated’

BENGALURU: Former Minister and Congress MLA H.C. Mahadevappa, a close associate of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and a prominent Dalit leader, on Wednesday dismissed allegations being made against him amid speculation surrounding a possible Cabinet expansion, describing them as baseless and politically motivated.

It may be noted that a Bengaluru resident has submitted a complaint to Karnataka Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot seeking an independent probe into alleged corruption and irregularities involving Congress MLA and former Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa.

The complaint alleges misuse of welfare funds, manipulation of tenders issued by the Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Society (KREIS), fabrication of records and abuse of official position during Mahadevappa’s tenure as a minister.

BJP opposes 500-acre land acquisition near Bidadi, slams govt

BENGALURU

STRONGLY opposing the final notification to acquire nearly 500 acres for the proposed GBIT near Bidadi, state BJP president B Y Vijayendra on Wednesday accused Chief Minister D K Shivakumar of prioritising real estate over the welfare of farmers and the poor, and demanded that the land acquisition process be halted immediately.

A delegation of BJP leaders, including Vijayendra and Leaders of the opposition in the Assembly and Council, R Ashoka and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, visited villages around Bidadi to meet farmers protesting against the township project.

“The priority of the CM and the Congress government

is not farmers or building houses for the poor. Within 24 hours of taking charge, the CM has shown that this government’s priority is real estate,” Vijayendra claimed.

Speaking to reporters ahead of the visit, he said the BJP strongly condemned and opposed the government’s move to “forcefully and illegally” acquire farmers’ land under the guise of a township at Bidadi. “The top priority of any government should be to come to the rescue of farmers in distress, but it is unfortunate that Bengaluru’s real estate has become the priority for the CM. On behalf of the BJP, I urge the CM to stop being adamant, listen to the issues faced by farmers and not evict them. I demand that the land acquisition process

be immediately dropped,” he added. The final notification has been issued for the acquisition of 499 acres across three villages in Ramanagara and Harohalli taluks for the Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township, which is among Shivakumar’s ambitious projects—projected as India’s “first AI-powered integrated township”—sources said. The project is expected to cover 7,481 acres across nine villages in the region. The notification issued recently is likely to be the first in a series of land acquisition notifications to be issued in the days ahead, sources added. According to reports, the Greater Bengaluru Development Authority (GBDA) has floated a Rs 26-crore tender to appoint a consultant for preparing the



master plan, detailed project report (DPR) and providing project management services for the proposed GBIT.

Ahead of the BJP leaders’ visit, posters critical of the BJP and JD(S) were reportedly found at various places near Bidadi. Responding to the poster campaign, Vijayendra said BJP leaders were

not Congress legislators to be intimidated by such threats. “We have a duty to stand by the farmers of the state. We have a responsibility to become their voice and we are doing it,” he added.

During the visit, BJP leaders met farmers and dairy producers who strongly oppose the Bidadi township

project and listened to their grievances. Ashoka asserted that a “BJP-JD(S) government will come to power in the future and cancel the project.

“We will not allow this project to be implemented even now. When I visited the milk producers’ centre, I learned that six lakh litres of milk are produced daily, generating annual business worth Rs 25 crore. Will Shivakumar give farmers Rs 25 crore every year?” he asked.

Noting that silk-related business in the region generates Rs 35 crore in revenue, he said, “The leaves required for silkworms cannot be imported from abroad.

The government must explain what will happen after the silk ecosystem is

destroyed.” “There are lakhs of cows here—should they be sent to slaughterhouses? Where will fodder come from? The government casually says it will give Rs 2 crore. But where should farmers go with that money? They cannot buy equivalent land with that amount,” he further said.

Pointing out that the present generation did not want to give up property passed down through generations, Ashoka said, “Have Bidadi farmers applied asking for residential sites? Who are these sites being created for? They will be allotted to people coming from elsewhere, while local farmers will be left destitute.” Referring to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s remarks on environmental destruction during his visit

to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ashoka said his own party’s government in Karnataka was destroying agricultural land in Bidadi.

“Rahul Gandhi should come and see this,” he said.

Alleging that agricultural land was being destroyed for the township project, he said, “There are six lakh coconut and arecanut trees here. Mango, sapota, silk, banana and other crops are grown. Farmers’ livelihoods depend on these.” “In Bengaluru, eight lakh sites developed by government agencies and 10 lakh apartments remain vacant. Including private developments, about 20 lakh flats are vacant. Even in Kempegowda Layout and Shivaram Karanth Layout, many sites remain unsold,” he said.

IN BRIEF



Cyber fraudsters use e-SIM trick to loot 50-yr-old man

BENGALURU: A 50-year-old private company employee from Victoria Layout in Bengaluru lost Rs. 15 lakh to cyber fraudsters who lured him with an offer of a free upgrade from 4G to 5G network. On June 13 around 3 pm, the victim received a call from an unknown number. The caller claimed to be a representative of a major telecom company and promised to upgrade his SIM to 5G for free. Believing the offer, the victim shared his EID number.

The fraudsters immediately converted his physical SIM to an e-SIM on their own device. Soon after, his mobile network stopped working. Within just 30 minutes, the fraudsters gained full control of his mobile number and email ID, hacked into his banking details, and applied for an instant loan of Rs. 15 lakh from his bank account without his knowledge. Around Rs. 14.6 lakh was credited to his account.

The fraudsters quickly transferred Rs. 2.2 lakh to other accounts. The victim noticed the suspicious activity in time and immediately contacted his bank and the cyber crime helpline. He managed to freeze his account, preventing further loss. On June 15, he filed a formal complaint at the Central Cyber Crime Police Station. Police have registered a case under the IT Act and Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and launched an investigation.

Gut health disorders on rise in capital city

BENGALURU: Environmental allergies and gut health disorders are emerging as major public health concerns in Bengaluru, driven by rapid urbanisation, increasing pollution levels and changing lifestyles, according to leading homeopathic physician and researcher Dr. Kushal Banerjee.

Highlighting the growing burden of allergic diseases, Dr. Banerjee said that nearly 20 to 30 per cent of Indians are estimated to suffer from allergic rhinitis, making metropolitan cities such as Bengaluru particularly vulnerable. Factors such as vehicular emissions, construction dust, pollen exposure and changing climatic conditions are contributing to the rise in respiratory and allergy-related illnesses. Studies indicate that more than half of working professionals experience symptoms of allergic rhinitis, including sneezing, nasal congestion and itchy eyes. Persistent allergies can also lead to sleep disturbances, fatigue, poor concentration and reduced workplace productivity.

'SellRight by Spinny' campaign

BENGALURU: Used-car platform Spinny has expanded its nationwide "God Promise" campaign to Karnataka, with cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar fronting the initiative aimed at making car selling simpler, fairer and more transparent for customers across the state.

The campaign, which is being promoted through television, transit and outdoor advertising, focuses on "SellRight by Spinny," the company's seller-centric offering. The service promises fair price discovery, instant payments, free and quick RC transfer support and end-to-end assistance to reduce hassles in the vehicle-selling process.

According to the company, Bengaluru has been its largest market since inception and continues to play a key role in the growth of India's organised pre-owned car sector. Spinny said the city's preference for technology-driven and transparent transactions has significantly contributed to the evolution of the used-car market.

'Provide security to Mahaswamiji over alleged death threats'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

A group of seers representing various communities in Karnataka on Wednesday appealed to Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar to provide adequate security to Sri Pranavanandaram Mahaswamiji, pontiff of the Brahmarshi Narayanaguru Shakti Peetha Trust, citing alleged death threats made against him on social media.

The seers met the Chief Minister at his Sadashivana-

gar residence in Bengaluru and submitted a memorandum seeking immediate protection for the pontiff.

According to the memorandum, Sri Pranavanandaram Mahaswamiji, who is also associated with the Sri Sharanabasaveshwara Math in Haveri and the Brahmarshi Narayanaguru Shakti Peetha in Kalaburagi, has allegedly been receiving threats following remarks he made at a community gathering held in Gokarna. The petitioners stated that



the seer had raised concerns regarding alleged injustice meted out to the Ediga and other backward commu-

nities and had urged that government grants be distributed equally among all communities.

Following his remarks, they alleged that certain organisations and leaders belonging to the Kuruba community at the state, district and taluk levels had planned protests against him.

The memorandum further alleged that threatening comments, including death threats, had been posted against the seer on television platforms and social

media by some individuals. Expressing concern over the situation, the seers urged the government to ensure that no communal or caste-based tensions arise and that the safety of Sri Pranavanandaram Mahaswamiji is safeguarded.

Among those who submitted the memorandum were seers representing different communities, including Sri Sangamananda Swamiji of the Sarvadharm Samaja, Sri Doddendra Swamiji of the Vishwakar-

ma community, Sri Sardar Sevalal Swamiji of the Banjara community, Sri Basavamurthy Kumbara Guddayya Swamiji of the Kumbara community, Halliraya Natikar Swamiji of the Hoogar community, Sri Karunakara Swamiji of the Are Alemari community and Sri Marulashankara Swamiji of the Pinjara community.

The Chief Minister is yet to officially respond to the request for enhanced security for the seer.

BDA launches online property tax calculator

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

IN a major relief for plot owners, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has launched a new online property tax calculator that enables citizens to calculate their property tax quickly, accurately and transparently without visiting BDA offices.

The new digital facility is aimed at simplifying the tax assessment process and eliminating confusion regarding guideline values and other parameters that were previously difficult for the public to understand. BDA officials said the calculator is completely formula-based and has been designed to ensure transparency and accuracy in tax calculations.

The online calculator is simple to use. Property owners first need to select their layout from the list of BDA-approved layouts, which includes major areas such as Banashankari, HSR Layout and several others. Once the layout is selected, the system automatically fetches the latest guideline value notified by the Karnataka Registration

Plot owners can now estimate tax from home



Department for that particular locality, eliminating the need for manual searches.

Users are then required to enter the plot size in square metres. For instance, a standard 40x60 site measures around 2,400 square feet or approximately 223

square metres. Based on these details, the calculator instantly computes the property tax amount.

The portal also factors in rebates, penalties and previous dues. Users can enter the date on which they intend to pay the tax, and the calculator automatically applies the applicable rebate or penalty. A 5 per cent rebate is available for payments made within the prescribed deadline, generally by April 30, while a 10 per cent penalty is added for delayed payments, usually after July 1.

In addition, taxpayers can enter outstanding property tax or maintenance dues from previous years to obtain the exact total amount payable.

BDA said the new system will significantly reduce dependence on intermediaries and allow citizens to independently verify and calculate their annual property tax using a mobile phone or computer. The authority has urged all BDA plot owners to make use of the online facility and experience a faster, more transparent tax payment process.

Cabinet expansion decision rests with high command: Ahmed

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

AMID growing political buzz over the Legislative Council elections and the much-anticipated Cabinet expansion in Karnataka, senior Congress leader and former minister Zameer Ahmed Khan met former MP D.K. Suresh in Bengaluru on Wednesday, triggering fresh speculation in political circles.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Zameer Ahmed said the Congress is a high-command-driven party and all decisions regarding Cabinet expansion will be taken by the party leadership. "I was expecting a ministerial berth in the first list, but it did not happen. I am hopeful of finding a place in the second list. Even if that does not happen, I have no disappointment. I have never publicly demanded a ministerial position. My supporters have staged protests seeking representation for me, which is natural," he said.

Rejecting reports of dis-



satisfaction, Zameer asked reporters whether his face reflected any disappointment. He also highlighted his proximity to the party leadership, stating that he had actively campaigned for the Congress during elections in Kerala and Telangana.

On the upcoming Legislative Council election, Zameer expressed confidence about the Congress securing victory. Referring to the Congress Legislature Party meeting held at a resort in Bidadi, he said around 140 legislators were united behind the party candidates.

"We are fully united. Even if 28 legislators vote for a can-

didate, victory is assured. We do not require any additional votes," he said. Responding to allegations that Congress leaders had approached JDS legislators seeking support, Zameer denied the claim and maintained that the party has adequate numbers to secure victory on its own.

The Congress Legislature Party meeting, chaired by Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, was attended by several senior leaders, including Siddaramaiah, Ran-deep Singh Surjewala, B.K. Hariprasad and other ministers, where election strategy and political developments were discussed.

Man held for 'strangling' live-in partner to death

BENGALURU

A 27-year-old man was arrested for allegedly strangling his live-in partner to death following a heated argument, police said on Wednesday. The deceased was identified as Anusha (20). The victim and her partner Sharath, who worked as a water tanker driver in Bengaluru hailed from Sakleshpur in Hassan district, they said.

Police said the couple met through Instagram and had been living together at a rented house in Malleswaram for the last six months. According to police, the couple had a heated argument on Saturday night over personal and family-related issues, following which Sharath allegedly strangled the woman to death.

However, the matter was reported to police on Monday, following which a team from Seshadripuram Police Station inspected the scene of crime. A case of murder was registered, following which the accused was arrested in connection with the incident, a senior police officer said. Further investigation is underway.

Six, including two men held in prostitution raid

BENGALURU

SIX persons, including four women have been arrested for allegedly running a prostitution racket from rented houses and a spa in the city, police said on Wednesday.

The arrests were made following raids conducted on different dates by the Women Protection Squad of the Central Crime Branch in Kamakshipalya, K R Puram, Kumaraswamy Layout, Hennur, and Varthur, they said.

According to police, during the operations, six persons, including two men and four women who were allegedly involved in forcing and facilitating women into prostitution, were apprehended. Besides this, seven women engaged in

prostitution, including four from other states and three local women, were rescued, a senior police officer said.

"During interrogation, the apprehended persons admitted that, with the intention of earning illegal profits, they used to contact prospective customers over the telephone and arrange prostitution activities at rented houses," he said. They also confessed to conducting prostitution activities under the guise of body massage services at the spa, the officer said.

Cases have been registered against the accused at Kamakshipalya, K R Puram, Kumaraswamy Layout, Hennur, and Varthur Police Stations, and further investigation is in progress, police said.

Tata Trusts announces major endowment for IIMB

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

IIM Bangalore has received a landmark philanthropic commitment from the Tata Trusts to develop its new School of Undergraduate Studies in Bengaluru. The grant will support the institute's academic vision, campus infrastructure and long-term plans for excellence in undergraduate education. Located roughly 27 kilometres from the main IIMB campus, the new school reflects the institute's aim to bring the same level of academic rigour and global standards it applies to its postgraduate and executive programmes to the undergraduate level.

The school will begin operations this August with two four-year full-time residential programmes. One is a BSc Honours in Economics with a minor in Data Science, while the other is a BSc Honours in Data Science with a minor in Economics. Each programme will admit 40 students, creating a total initial cohort of 80. The curriculum blends data science, economics and business studies within an interdisciplinary approach that prepares graduates for data-driven professional environments through focused

To launch IIM Bangalore's new undergraduate school



learning, close mentorship and personalised academic support. The endowment will fund the creation of high-quality academic and residential facilities. It will also enable the formation of new research clusters that bring together fields such as artificial intelligence, data science, algorithmic design, Indian Knowledge Systems and applied business learning. This support will further help IIM Bangalore attract and retain faculty members from a wide range of academic backgrounds.

The Tata Trusts view such investments in knowledge and the people who advance it as among the most enduring contributions philanthropy can make. Their long tradition of backing institutions that combine academic excellence with a connection to India's development goals aligns with

the design of these undergraduate programmes centred on data, economics and evidence-based thinking. Noel Tata, Chairman of the Tata Trusts, noted that the organisation has for over a century backed some of India's most important institutions, including the Tata Memorial Hospital and the Indian Institute of Science. He described the current support as following the same approach of shaping institutions at an early stage so that philanthropic capital influences not only physical structures but also the overall character and ambitions of the organisation.

Dr. Devi Shetty, Chairperson of the Board of Governors at IIM Bangalore, welcomed the endowment and said that transformative support of this kind is essential for placing institutes of national importance on a path to global leadership.

He emphasised the institute's commitment to developing undergraduate talent and building a pipeline of thinkers equipped for a data-driven world. Siddharth Sharma, CEO of the Tata Trusts, stated that the organisation looks to support initiatives that combine ambitious vision with practical grounding. He said backing IIM Bangalore as it extends its tradition of excellence into undergraduate education reflects their belief that investing in knowledge and in the people who will shape India's future ranks among the most meaningful contributions possible.

Professor U Dinesh Kumar, Director-in-Charge of IIM Bangalore, explained that the programmes are designed not only to build technical skills but also to help students ask better questions, handle complexity and lead with evidence. He added that the Tata Trusts' support enables deeper investment in faculty, research infrastructure and the overall campus environment, creating a state-of-the-art learning ecosystem aligned with India's developmental priorities and global capabilities.

Bidadi township row

Kumaraswamy says posters against family won't contain his fight

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

UNION Minister HD Kumaraswamy launched a sharp attack on Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, alleging that a smear campaign was being carried out against him and his family over the proposed Bidadi township issue.

Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, Kumaraswamy said he had expected Shivakumar to rise above such tactics after becoming Chief Minister, but alleged that the practice of circulating objectionable content and putting up defamatory posters had continued.

"I thought that after becoming Chief Minister, he would stop indulging in such activities. But that mindset has not changed. Posters are being pasted not only against me but also against my wife. They have put up posters claiming that my family owns 100 acres of land, along with photographs of me and my son Nikhil," Kumaraswamy alleged.

Rejecting the allegations, he clarified that his family had legally purchased land decades ago. "We bought 46 acres nearly 40 years ago after years of hard work. Apart from that, there is the 100 acres they are talking about?



My wife Anita Kumaraswamy has purchased around 36 to 37 acres legally. How can anyone falsely portray

legally acquired property through posters?" he questioned. Kumaraswamy further al-

leged that supporters of certain individuals were behind the poster campaign and questioned whether such tactics suited a person occupying the Chief Minister's office. "Will people believe everything that is written on posters? At least after becoming Chief Minister, one should maintain certain standards. This kind of behaviour is not good for the state," he said.

Calling it a reflection of Shivakumar's "distorted mindset", Kumaraswamy alleged that such political methods had been followed for years and continued even after assuming the state's top post. "He has targeted not

only me but also leaders like R. Ashoka, Chalavadi Narayanaswamy and BY Vijayendra through posters. If anyone has committed wrongdoing, let the government direct officials to take legal action. Why resort to anonymous posters and propaganda?" he asked.

Referring to the Congress government, Kumaraswamy claimed that several ministers and legislators had been silenced from speaking openly on important issues. "We thought things would change, but unfortunately that mentality has not gone away," he said.

On the upcoming Legislative Council elections,

Kumaraswamy said his party was a smaller political force and acknowledged the Congress government's advantages. "We are a small party. They have the government, money power, organisational strength and public support. It is not easy to fight against such a powerful establishment," he remarked.

Kumaraswamy also declined to respond to remarks made by Agriculture Minister N. Chaluvarayaswamy. "I will not react to Chaluvarayaswamy's statements. He is making such comments only to protect his chair," the Union Minister said.

PAWAN FULFILS AILING FAN'S WISH WITH PERSONAL VISIT

Also fulfils another wish of Niranjan by promising to arrange a pet dog after learning of the teenager's fondness for animals

- During the interaction, Niranjan shared old photographs and videos of himself performing dance routines imitating Pawan Kalyan from the time when he was healthy, earning him the nickname "Chota Gabbar Singh"
- PK enquired about his health, interacted with his parents, and offered spiritual support by presenting Tirupati temple Teertha Prasadam
- He also extended financial assistance of Rs.1 lakh towards medical expenses



WARANGAL

ANDHRA Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena Party president Pawan Kalyan on Wednesday visited the residence of 17-year-old Niranjan in Hanamkonda, fulfilling the young fan's long-cherished

wish to meet him.

Niranjan, who is battling a rare genetic disorder that has left him bedridden, was personally comforted by the Deputy Chief Minister during the emotional visit.

Pawan Kalyan enquired about his health, interacted with his parents, and offered



spiritual support by presenting Tirupati temple Teertha Prasadam. He also extended financial assistance of Rs.1 lakh towards medical expenses.

Moved by the family's circumstances, Pawan Kalyan directed Jana Sena leaders to help improve the family's livelihood by facilitating a canteen business. He further promised to arrange special prayers at the revered Bhadrakali Ammavari Temple and present a consecrated silver idol of Goddess Bhadrakali to the family.

The Deputy Chief Minister also fulfilled another wish of Niranjan by promising to arrange a pet dog after learning of the teenager's fondness for animals. Dur-



ing the interaction, Niranjan shared old photographs and videos of himself performing dance routines imitating Pawan Kalyan from the time when he was healthy,

earning him the nickname "Chota Gabbar Singh".

Following the visit, Pawan Kalyan proceeded to the Bhadrakali Temple in Warangal to offer prayers.



FOOD POISONING SCARE

Over 20 children fall ill after eating pani puri in Sircilla

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAJANNA SIRICILLA

MORE than 20 children reportedly fell ill after consuming pani puri at KCR Nagar in Thangallapalli mandal of Rajanna Sircilla district, triggering concerns over food safety and hygiene standards in the area.

According to local sources, the children ate pani puri sold by a roadside vendor on Tuesday evening. By Wednesday morning, several of them developed symptoms including vomiting, diarrhoea and fever, prompting worried parents to rush them to the Government District Hospital in Sircilla.

Doctors at the hospital said the children were undergoing treatment and their condition was being closely monitored. Preliminary assessments pointed towards suspected food poisoning, though officials were yet to confirm the exact cause of

- RDO Sridhar Babu reviews treatment and directs officials to monitor victims
- Doctors suspect food poisoning as children undergo treatment at district hospital
- Residents seek action against unhygienic food vendors and illegal food units

the illness.

Health authorities were expected to investigate the incident and collect samples for analysis.

Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) Sridhar Babu visited the district hospital and interacted with the affected children and their family members.

He reviewed the medical facilities being provided and

directed hospital authorities to ensure the best possible treatment. The RDO also instructed officials to keep a close watch on the health condition of the children until their recovery.

The incident sparked concern among local residents, who alleged that several roadside food vendors and food preparation units in and around Sircilla were operating without proper hygiene standards and regulatory oversight. They claimed that inadequate inspections by the Food Safety Department had allowed unsafe food products to be sold openly.

Residents called for immediate inspections of roadside eateries and food preparation centres across the district. They urged authorities to take stringent action against violators and strengthen food safety monitoring mechanisms to prevent similar incidents in the future.

KAVITHA RULES OUT RECONCILIATION WITH BRS

- "I have closed the book called BRS. I am going to write a new history with TRS"
- Revealed that floating her own political outfit was never her original plan



HYDERABAD

TRS president K Kavitha has said that her association with the BRS, led by her father K Chandrasekhar Rao, is over and that she is focusing on building a future with her fledgling party.

She said, "Definitely, that chapter is closed. It is said that, in life, we have to turn a page sometimes and close the book sometimes. I have closed the book called BRS. I am going to write a new history with TRS (her own outfit Telangana Rakshana Sena)." She was responding to a

question if reconciliation with BRS was possible if her father made an offer. In the backdrop of "bitter experiences" of not being able to deliver on crucial promises when the BRS was in power, she said she was going to people to build a "great Telangana," including achieving social justice. She revealed that floating her own political outfit was never her original plan.

Kavitha noted that her suspension from the BRS occurred without a show-cause notice or any semblance of internal democracy. Alleging that parties in Telangana, including BRS, were "heavily

focused on national issues", she said her party, Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS), would prioritise regional issues. Asked about her charge that BRS abandoned Telangana's aspirations, she criticised the party led by her father for "failing" to recognise most of the "freedom fighters" who fought for statehood, and said not enough was done for the families of those who sacrificed their lives for the cause. She wished she had fought harder for the cause during the BRS regime. Once BRS moved away from the core ideology, the umbilical cord between

the Telangana people and the party was severed, she said.

To a query on the principal rival of her party, Kavitha replied that the Congress is the main opposition as it is in power. According to her, the BJP and BRS are in "sleep mode", and only her TRS is launching protests on a host of public issues.

In response to Congress' criticism that she was part of the government when BRS was in power, she admitted that she could have done more on various issues during the previous regime, though one cannot go beyond a limit when part of a party. However, the Congress, now in power, cannot shift the blame to the party that was previously in power, she said.

Regarding her party's immediate goals, she said TRS has taken up struggles on public issues, including crop procurement and school fees regulation. In the long run, the TRS wants to ensure Telangana's share in Godavari and Krishna waters.

SMS to replace paper receipts at Mee Seva Centres

- Mee Seva goes paperless
- SMS receipts from June 19
- No more paper acknowledgements
- Receipts now on mobile
- Digital shift for Mee Seva
- Download receipts through SMS link
- Mobile-based acknowledgements

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

IN a major step towards digital service delivery, Mee Seva will discontinue the issuance of paper acknowledgement receipts for applications from June 19. Under the new system, applicants



will receive an SMS immediately after submitting their application, containing application details and a link to access the acknowledgement receipt.

According to official instructions, citizens can use the link provided in the SMS to view, download, or print the receipt whenever required. The move is aimed at reducing paper usage and improving convenience for applicants.

Mee Seva operators have

been directed not to issue paper receipts after the new system comes into effect. They have also been instructed to ensure that applicants provide a correct and active mobile number at the time of submission so that the acknowledgement SMS reaches them without delay.

Officials said operators must inform applicants that the receipt will be delivered through SMS and advise them to retain the message

until the requested service is completed and the certificate is issued. In cases where the SMS is accidentally deleted or lost, operators can use the "Resend SMS" option available in the Mee Seva system to send the acknowledgement again.

Operators have also been asked to assist citizens in accessing and downloading the receipt using the link provided in the message.

The department has warned that strict action will be taken against individuals, who continue issuing paper receipts or violate the new guidelines after June 19, 2026.

With the implementation of the new system, all Mee Seva application acknowledgements will be delivered digitally, enabling citizens to access their receipts conveniently through their mobile phones.

Mahesh Goud offers prayers at Jahangir Peer dargah



- Attends a traditional feast (Kanduru)
- Residents submit representations against establishment of dump yard in Siddapur



HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHADNAGAR

TPCC chief Mahesh Goud has said that the Congress government, under the lead-

ership of Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy, is committed to the comprehensive development of the revered Hazrat Jahangir Peer Dargah, a symbol of communal har-



mony located on the outskirts of Innulnarva Gram Panchayat in Kothur mandal.

Mahesh Goud visited the dargah on Wednesday to attend a traditional feast (Kanduru) organised by his relatives. He was accorded a grand welcome at Kothur Y-Junction by Congress leaders and party workers under the leadership of MLA Veerlapalli Shankar. Later, accompanied

by MLA Veerlapalli Shankar and Waqf Board Chairman Azmatullah Hussaini, he offered prayers at the dargah and presented flowers and a ceremonial chadar.

During the visit, farmers and residents from Siddapur, Innulnarva and nearby villages submitted a representation opposing the proposed dumping yard on the Siddapur outskirts. Responding

to their concerns, Mahesh Goud said the State government has already sanctioned funds to provide essential amenities for devotees at the dargah. He assured that all developmental works would be undertaken without causing inconvenience to local residents.

On reports circulating on social media regarding the establishment of a dumping

yard in the area, Mahesh Goud clarified that such reports were merely rumours. He said only a proposal had been forwarded and emphasised that he and the Congress leadership were opposed to setting up the dumping yard at the proposed location. He assured the public that efforts would be made to prevent its establishment in the area and relocate the project elsewhere.

AP team studies Singapore models for Amaravati growth

- A delegation led by MA&UD minister Narayana visited Singapore to study global best practices in urban planning, sustainable infrastructure and scientific waste management
- Officials hold discussions with NUS Cities and Surbana Jurong on climate resilience, smart infrastructure, digital twin technology, urban analytics and capacity-building initiatives for Amaravati
- The team also examined Singapore's waste-to-energy and resource recovery systems at the Tuas South Incineration Plant, with plans to explore suitable models for Andhra Pradesh's urban development

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

A high-level Andhra Pradesh delegation led by municipal administration and urban development (MA&UD) minister P Narayana visited Singapore to study global best practices in urban planning, sustainable infrastructure and scientific waste management, with a focus on applying key learnings to the development of Amaravati and other cities in the state.

The visit was undertaken on the directions of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, who has stressed

the need to build Amaravati and major urban centres by adopting international standards in planning, governance and infrastructure development.

The delegation, which included MA&UD principal secretary S Suresh Kumar and APCRDA additional commissioner Praveenchand, held discussions with leading Singapore institutions such as NUS Cities, Surbana Jurong and the Tuas South Incineration Plant.

At NUS Cities, officials explored opportunities for collaboration in urban planning, climate resilience, gov-



Members of AP municipal administration and urban development department delegation at Tuas South Incineration Plant in Singapore on Wednesday

ernance, capacity building and data-driven city management. Discussions centred on how global expertise could support Amaravati, one of the world's largest greenfield capital city projects. Areas identified for possible cooperation included urban analytics, digital twin technology, climate studies, executive training programmes and the establishment of an Urban Futures Lab.

The delegation also visited the Surbana Jurong Innovation Hub in Singapore's Jurong Innovation District

to understand how urban planning can be integrated with economic development, sustainability and smart infrastructure. Officials examined technologies related to energy-efficient buildings, intelligent monitoring systems, green construction practices and innovation-led urban growth.

As part of its study on municipal solid waste management, the team toured the Tuas South Incineration Plant and interacted with officials of Singapore's National Environment Agency.

The visit provided insights into waste collection, waste-to-energy conversion, ash management, resource recovery and environmental safeguards.

Speaking during the visit, minister Narayana said the state government is committed to building clean, green and economically productive cities. He noted that Singapore's success highlights the importance of integrated planning, institutional coordination and long-term urban governance.

Principal secretary Suresh Kumar said the visit offered valuable insights for Amaravati's development and opened avenues for technical collaboration and knowledge exchange. He added that the government would examine suitable models and technologies that could be adapted to Andhra Pradesh's urban development and waste management initiatives.

The MA&UD department said the outcomes of the visit would be reviewed further to identify actionable partnerships, pilot projects and capacity-building programmes aimed at strengthening urban development across the state.

Amarnath hits back at TDP over 'fabricated' row

- YSRCP leader and former minister says his recent remarks were not meant against women but against home minister Anitha's comments

- States that irrespective of the party affiliation, women deserve to be respected and he will continue to support the party women

- Accuses the coalition gov't of using 'fabricated' controversies to divert attention from its failures

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

FORMER IT minister and YSRCP regional coordinator Gudivada Amarnath said that his recent remarks were never meant against women but in response to unparliamentary language used by home minister Vangalapati Anitha against Vijayamma, YS Bharathi Reddy and former chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan



Former IT Minister and YSRCP regional coordinator Gudivada Amarnath speaking at a media conference in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday

Reddy for quite a while. Despite their political affiliation, Amarnath told in a media conference here on Wednesday, that women deserve to be respected and that his family political legacy that continued for three generations always upheld dignity and values.

However, Amarnath claimed that controversy was deliberately created over his remarks by the TDP three days after his speech to gain political advantage and divert attention from the coalition government's alleged failures.

He questioned the selective outrage of TDP leaders, wondering why were quiet when derogatory remarks were made against Y S Vijayamma, Y S Bharathi Reddy, former minister R K Roja, among

others, or when leaders in their own party made 'objectionable' statements targeting other women.

Referring to home minister Anitha's recent comments such as 'who is he?', 'that fellow', addressing a former minister, Amarnath said it clearly indicates her arrogance. "No matter what, I will continue to defend YSRCP leaders and workers against personal attacks and stand by my remarks against the Home Minister as I did not say anything wrong," he said. The former minister alleged that the coalition government is using 'fabricated' controversies to divert the attention from its failure in maintaining law and order in the state.

Pointing out to rising number of murders, attacks on women, political violence, missing children cases, lock-up deaths and the escape of a ganja smuggler from police custody, Amarnath questioned the Home Minister's silence over such burning issues. "However, her attack on the opposition continues," he remarked. Underlining YSRCP's commitment to women and Dalit empowerment, Amarnath stated that leaders who insulted Dalits and were silent on derogatory remarks made against women have no moral right to lecture others on dignity and social justice.

Lokesh pitches Anantapur as satellite hub

- Invites Pixelpspace CTO to set up factory in AP after land hurdles in Bengaluru
- Promotes Space Cities, aerospace parks, and ready-to-use industrial ecosystems
- Continues AP's push to woo aerospace firms from Karnataka with investor-friendly policies

VIJAYAWADA

IT and electronics minister Nara Lokesh invited the chief technology officer (CTO) and founder of a company that builds and operates remote sensing satellites to Anantapur after the latter posted that getting land for making a satellite factory on the outskirts of Bengaluru is more difficult than making satel-



lites. "Trying to get land for making a satellite factory in the outskirts of BLR has been way more difficult than actually making said satellites," Kshitij Khandelwal, CTO and founder of Pixelpspace, posted on X.

Lokesh invited Kshitij to Anantapur near Bengaluru. "Kshitij, there's a new investor-friendly destination on the outskirts of Bengaluru. It's called Anantapur," he said.

He added that Andhra Pradesh is building Space Cities, aerospace parks and ready-to-go industrial ecosystems so founders can spend their time building sat-

ellites instead of hunting for land. The minister even asked the Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB) to contact Kshitij.

Earlier, responding to Kshitij's post, Karnataka's minister for large, medium industries and infrastructure development, M B Patil, said that his office would get in touch with him. This is not the first time that Lokesh has tried to woo aerospace firms from Karnataka. Last year in October, Lokesh extended an open invitation to aerospace companies to consider Andhra Pradesh as an option after then Karnataka Chief

Minister Siddaramaiah announced withdrawal of the proposed land acquisition in Devanahalli taluk for an aerospace park near Bengaluru, following opposition from farmers who were set to lose their land for the project.

"Dear Aerospace industry, sorry to hear about this. I have a better idea for you. Why don't you look at Andhra Pradesh instead? We have an attractive aerospace policy for you, with best-in-class incentives and over 8000 acres of ready-to-use land (just outside Bengaluru)! Hope to see you soon to talk across the table," Lokesh had posted while tagging a story on the Karnataka government's decision.

Earlier, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had ruffled feathers in Karnataka by offering a 10,000-acre land parcel in Anantapur district to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for potential expansion.

PMVBRY to disburse Rs 2,400 cr sops

- Over 1.92 cr first-time employees to get wage incentive up to Rs 15,000 in two instalments
- Employers eligible for Rs 3,000 per month per new hire, with extended benefits for manufacturing sector
- National event at Vignyan Bhawan to mark rollout; regional disbursal in Krishna district at VR Siddhartha Engineering College

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Government of India has launched the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar



Additional Central Provident Fund Commissioner Andrew Prabhu and Regional Provident Fund Commissioner-II Abdul Khader addressing the media in Vijayawada on Wednesday

Joyana (PMVBRY), formerly known as the Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme, with the objective of promoting large-scale employment generation, improving employability, and expanding social security coverage across sectors, particularly in manufacturing.

With a total financial outlay of Rs 99,446 crore, the scheme aims to facilitate the creation of more than 3.5 crore jobs nationwide over two years. Of these, nearly 1.92 crore beneficiaries are expected to be first-time entrants into the formal workforce. The benefits apply to jobs created between August

1, 2025, and July 31, 2027.

Addressing a press briefing at the EPFO zonal office here on Wednesday, Andrew Prabhu, additional Central Provident Fund commissioner and Abdul Khader, Regional Provident Fund Commissioner-II, explained the significance and implementation of the scheme.

Under Part A, first-time employees registered with EPFO and earning up to Rs 1 lakh per month are eligible for an incentive equivalent to one month's wage, up to Rs 15,000, paid in two instalments after six and twelve months of continuous service. The second instalment

is linked to completion of a financial literacy programme.

Under Part B, employers will receive incentives of up to Rs 3,000 per month per additional employee for two years. Manufacturing sector employers will receive the benefit for an additional two years. The incentives are aimed at encouraging sustained employment and formal workforce expansion.

To mark the successful implementation of the scheme, a national-level event will be held at Vignyan Bhawan, New Delhi, on Friday, in the presence of the Prime Minister. Benefits worth approximately Rs 2,400 crore will be disbursed to eligible beneficiaries. In the erstwhile Krishna district, a regional event will be organised at VR Siddhartha Engineering College, Kanuru, with participation from public representatives, industry leaders, employers, employees and EPFO officials.

43 doctors dismissed for unauthorised absence

- Action follows disciplinary proceedings against doctors absent for up to four years
- 34 doctors submit resignations after notices; government processing cases
- Health dept cracks down on absenteeism across public hospitals

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE state government has initiated the process of permanently removing 43 civil assistant surgeons from service for prolonged unauthorised absence from duty, health minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav announced on Wednesday.

The minister said disciplinary action was taken after the doctors failed to respond to show-cause notices and charge memos issued under service rules, despite some remaining absent from government service for as long as four years.

The action comes a month after the government removed 51 doctors working in teaching hospitals under the Directorate of Medical Education for similar violations. The latest proceedings involve doctors serving under the Directorate of Secondary Health



Services, including specialists in General Medicine, Orthopedics, Gynecology and other disciplines.

According to the health department, a total of 118 permanent doctors were found to be unauthorisedly absent from duty. Under existing government rules, doctors who remain absent without authorization for more than one year are liable for removal from service.

Of the 118 doctors, 43 have now reached the final stage of disciplinary proceedings for dismissal. Another 34 doctors submitted their resignations after receiving show-cause notices and charge memos. The government is in the process of accepting the resignations of 15 doctors, while disciplinary inquiries are continuing against others.

Director of secondary health Chakradhara Babu said 11 inquiry officers have been appointed district-wise under the Andhra Pradesh Civil Services (CCA) Rules, 1991, to examine cases involving 19 doctors who resigned after charges were framed. Explanations will be sought and further action taken based on inquiry reports.

12 days on, missing toddler mystery deepens

- Search for the two-year-old girl from Ch Agharam enters its 12th day, with police probing all possibilities, including abduction, animal attack and family-related disputes
- Investigators have analysed CCTV footage, mobile data from 170 phones, surveyed all 470 houses and questioned nearly 150 residents, besides tracing seasonal workers and nomadic groups
- Search operations have been expanded to a 10-km radius covering water bodies and 11 hills, while the family's pet dog, which disappeared with the child and returned days later before dying, remains a key focus of the probe

KAKINADA

THE search for a two-year-old girl who went missing from Ch Agharam village in Kakinada district entered its 12th day on Wednesday, with police continuing an extensive investigation and exploring all possible angles, including abduction, an animal attack and family-related disputes.

The child disappeared on June 6 after reportedly walking towards a cashew plantation near her village



along with the family's pet dog. She was last seen near a fence bordering the plantation. A villager who noticed her tried to alert the family but was attacked by the dog when he approached. By the time relatives and villagers reached the spot about 35 minutes later, the child had vanished.

A large-scale search operation involving police, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), dog squads, technical teams, forest officials and other departments has been underway since then.

Police said they have examined CCTV footage, questioned transport operators and analysed mobile phone data from the area. Around 170 mobile numbers active near the scene at the time of the incident have been identified and are being scrutinised. Investigators have also surveyed all 470 houses in the village and questioned nearly 150 residents.

Authorities are tracing seasonal workers and nomadic groups that frequented the area during the cashew season. A group that had camped nearby with dogs before the incident is also being questioned. Police dis-

Home minister visits the family, vows full support

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KAKINADA

HOME minister Vangalapati Anitha on Wednesday visited the family of two-year-old Gnaneshwari, who has been missing from Tunni, and assured them of the government's full support in tracing the child.

Speaking to the family members, the minister described the disappearance of the toddler as deeply distressing. She said the grief of Gnaneshwari's mother, who has been anxiously waiting for her daughter's return, was beyond words. Anitha said the police swung into action immediately after receiving information about the child's disappearance and launched extensive search operations. She noted that investigators were examining both technical evidence and field-level inputs, with multiple teams conducting searches and pursuing all possible leads. The home minister clarified that the government had shown no negligence in handling

missed speculation surrounding a local resident who had initially come under suspicion, saying repeated questioning by multiple teams revealed no evidence linking him to the disappearance.

Investigators are also examining the possibility of an animal attack. In coordination with forest officials, police recreated the circumstances of the disappearance by placing a



Home minister V Anitha interacts with the parents of the missing girl at Ch Agharam in Tunni mandal on Wednesday

the case. She said the investigation was being monitored on a daily basis and assured the family that search efforts would continue until the child's whereabouts were established.

"The government stands firmly with Gnaneshwari's family and will provide all necessary support," she said.

Anitha also expressed concern over what she described as misinformation being circulated on

social media platforms and certain YouTube channels regarding the case. She urged those spreading unverified information to stop immediately and warned that legal action would be initiated against individuals or platforms found disseminating false reports. The minister reiterated the government's commitment to finding the missing child and ensuring that the investigation proceeds without interruption.

meat-filled doll at the location where the child was last seen and installing surveillance cameras to monitor animal movement. Residents have reported the presence of jackals, wild dogs, wild boars and pythons in the surrounding forested hills. The family's pet dog remains a key focus of the investigation. The animal disappeared with the child and returned four days later in a distressed con-

dition. GPS tracking later showed it had travelled nearly eight kilometres along a route previously identified by a police dog squad. Despite fresh searches, no clue was found. The dog subsequently died and underwent a post-mortem examination. Search operations have now been expanded from a six-kilometre radius to nearly 10 kilometres, covering water bodies and 11 interconnected hills.

Govt's U-turn on Harappan 'Dancing Girl' is quite baffling

MORAL policing begins quite early these days. Now, sanskari commissars ensured that Class 9 students didn't see the iconic 'Dancing Girl' of Mohenjo-daro in its present form—with the torso uncovered. For decades, school students have seen the artefacts of the Indus Valley Civilisation, including the Dancing Girl, in the textbooks published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), an autonomous organisation established by the government in 1961. Its primary objective, its website says, was to assist and advice the Central and state governments on policies and programmes for qualitative educational development. Accordingly, its duties include preparation and publication of

"model textbooks, supplementary materials, newsletters, journals, and educational kits, multimedia digital content, and other educational materials." What kind of "model textbook" can preach moral policing over accurate presentation of facts and visuals? This was not the first time that sanskaris have objected to the famed bronze figurine, but their objections were reportedly brushed aside by "some government expert." Still, the retouched photograph is featured in the opening chapter, 'History of Arts', of Madhurima, the new arts education textbook for Class 9. In the doctored image, the figurine's torso was shaded from the shoulders down. Historian Michel Danino, who headed the textbook development committee

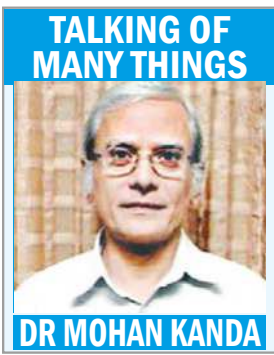
for NCERT's new Class 6 social science books, had told a newspaper last month that the NCERT was against placing the Dancing Girl on the opening page of a chapter on Indus Valley Civilisation. Danino, who is no longer a member of the committee, said "shading of her [Dancing Girl's] trunk is an act of censorship; unless we wish to return to Victorian morality, such prudishness is misplaced—should students, then, be barred from entering the National Museum, where the original figurine is housed, not to speak of many semi-nude or nude statues of goddesses, apsaras, etc.?" He expressed indignation at the creation of "a fake artefact which exists nowhere. That is just not done." He is wrong: it is done in India—not

merely done, but disturbingly normalised. Shading of the Dancing Girl's torso is not an isolated lapse in judgement; it belongs to a long and growing tradition of sanitising history to suit contemporary notions of propriety. Instead of allowing students to encounter the past on its own terms, institutions entrusted with education are recasting it through the lens of present-day moral anxieties. The result is neither history nor pedagogy, but a carefully curated fiction.

The irony is difficult to miss. The same civilisation whose achievements are celebrated in textbooks is deemed unsuitable for students when represented through one of its most famous artefacts. A bronze figurine created nearly

4,000 years back is altered because modern gatekeepers fear that young readers may see what generations of scholars, museum visitors and school-children have seen without scandal. The artefact survives; only its representation is censored. Such interventions reveal a troubling lack of confidence in both students and teachers. If adolescents can study wars, famines, social hierarchies and political violence, surely, they can also view an ancient sculpture in its original form. To suggest otherwise is to confuse education with protectionism and learning with moral supervision. Thankfully, the government has decided to restore the original Harappan Dancing Girl in textbooks. At least, for now.

FASTING ACROSS RELIGIOUS FAITHS



TALKING OF MANY THINGS

IN the Vedas 'vrata' or 'nomu's are religious rituals, vows, or observances aimed at fulfilling a desire, seeking blessings, ensuring family welfare, to attain specific goals such as health, wealth, prosperity or overcoming adversity. They involve specific, ritualized restrictions, such as avoiding certain foods on specific days, strict adherence to certain customs and vows, or a 'sankalpam', to gain spiritual merit. They primarily serve to align the individual with cosmic order, purify the mind and body, and foster discipline through voluntary sacrifice. They also represent a divine ordinance acting as a binding commitment to ethical conduct and spiritual focus, often involving fasting or specific ascetic practices to propitiate deities.

Such rituals call for spiritual discipline and lead to purification, adherence to divine laws and atonement, or 'prayaschitta', to neutralize past sins, negative karma, or to overcome defects in one's life. By sacrificing comforts such as food, the devotee creates a closer connection with the Almighty, thus fostering gratitude and devotion. In Vedic literature, Agni is often termed vratapā protector of the vrata, indicating that these observances ensure orderly behav-

our and divine protection.

A 'mauna vrata' is one form of such rituals. It is a spiritual and intentional vow of silence rooted in Indian traditions, where an individual abstains from speaking for a set period to cultivate inner peace, self-discipline, and introspection. It aims to reduce external stimuli, conserve mental energy, and achieve clarity of thought by turning one's focus inward.

Such a vow, however, is generally not permissible in Islam, and is considered an innovation or 'bid'ah'. The Holy Quran, no doubt, mentions a fast of silence observed by Maryam, an ardent devotee of Allah and the only woman mentioned by name in that scripture, who is recognized as a paragon of purity, piety, and submission to Allah. That practice, however, was for previous generations and was cancelled by Prophet Muhammad, who emphasized that abstaining from permissible speech is not an act of obedience.

The religious scriptures of major faiths contain many references to such practices. For instance, Parvati, the principal Hindu Goddess of love, beauty, marriage, children, and devotion, who is the consort of Lord Shiva, represents the divine feminine energy, or 'Shakti' that balances Shiva's asceticism. She began to be known as 'Aparna', or without leaves, because of the extreme penance she undertook to marry Lord Shiva, during which she gave up all food, including leaves. The name signifies her intense dedication and sacrifice, establishing her as a model of devotion.

Likewise, 'Varalakshmi' vrata is a significant Hindu puja, observed on the second Friday of the 'Shravana' month. It is

While a vrata covers a wide range of ritual vows in Hinduism, the Christian approach is centered on voluntarily humbling oneself before God through fasting, prayer, and sacrifice to focus on spiritual growth. The Islamic equivalents of vrata are generally called 'Sawm' or fasting or 'Siyam'.

dedicated to Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity, to whose boon granting form, married women fast and pray, for the well-being, health, and longevity of their husbands and children.

In 'Maha Bhagavata', Satyabhama, one of Lord Krishna's consorts, is famously known for her beauty and immense wealth. She believes that she holds the absolute highest place in Krishna's heart and wants to ensure that she would have Lord Krishna as her husband in every birth. The celestial musician and an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu, Sage Narada, informs her that in her current birth, she has Lord Krishna as her husband on account of her good fortune. To continue to have that fortune in all her future lives, she performs a special vow, which involves gifting Krishna to Narada and then trying to buy him back. Satyabhama tries to weigh Krishna against all her wealth, jewels, and gold, but the scales continue to remain lower on Krishna's side. It is only when she stops being proud and asks for help, and when a single Tulasi leaf is placed, with pure devotion, on the scale by Rukmini, consort of Krishna, and the first Queen of 'Dwaraka', the Kingdom of Krishna, and the embodiment of Goddess Lakshmi, that the scales balance. The message conveyed is that Krishna can be pleased only with sincere devotion, or 'bhakti', but not with wealth.

Also in the Hindu mythology is described the tale of how

the severe and intense penance of the venerated Sage Vishwamitra, characterised by decades-long austerity and aimed at surpassing Sage Vashistha, transforms him from the powerful warrior King Kaushika to a revered 'Brahmarshi'. The penance involves overcoming massive temptations, including Apsaras, or celestial nymphs, Menaka and Rambha, before finally mastering his anger and ego to attain supreme spiritual status. Yet another example can be found in Ramayana. Ravana, the ten-headed demon king of Lanka and an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva, performs an intense penance to Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva to gain immense power, knowledge, and invincibility. He sacrifices his ten heads, which grow back each time, symbolizing his dedication. This devotion grants him boons, making him a dominant ruler, a master of scriptures, and the possessor of the Celestial Weapon, 'Chandras'. Turning to Christian equivalents of such rituals, we find that the equivalent of a vrata is found in the spiritual disciplines of fasting and abstinence.

For example, 'Lent', the 40-day period before Easter, beginning on 'Ash Wednesday', is somewhat like a long-term vrata, involving abstinence, fasting, increased prayer, and acts of charity. The fasting is designed to foster self-denial, focus on prayer, and draw closer to God. Denying oneself food entirely for a period to focus on spiritual matters, is on the lines of Jesus'

40 days in the wilderness. Likewise, a 'vow' is a personal, voluntary promise made to God, such as committing to a season of fasting, a specific prayer routine, or abstaining from a habit.

Some examples are, the 'Daniel Fast', which is a common practice based on the Bible where individuals abstain from rich foods, such as meat, dairy or wine, for 21 days, consuming only vegetables and water and the 'Ember Days', which are traditional days of prayer and fasting which occur quarterly.

In summary, while a vrata covers a wide range of ritual vows in Hinduism, the Christian approach is centered on voluntarily humbling oneself before God through fasting, prayer, and sacrifice to focus on spiritual growth.

The Islamic equivalents of vrata are generally called 'Sawm' or fasting or 'Siyam'. Like the Hindu custom, Islamic fasting involves abstaining from food, drink, and sexual activity, from dawn until sunset to cultivate self-control, piety, and devotion to God. Examples include, 'Ramadan', also known as 'Ramzan', or obligatory fasting. The month-long fast during Ramadan is the most significant form of worship, to a mandatory, universal vow observed by all able Muslims. Several other fasts are also undertaken, such as 'Sunnah' fasts, or recommended vows, which are voluntary fasts, like the Hindu 'Kanya Vratas' or vows for desire. 'Shawwal', or fasting six days after Ramadan, observing the 'Ashura', or fasting on the 10th of Muharram. In addition, 'Kaffarah' or expiation fasts undertaken to make up for breaking a previous fast or as a penalty for certain transgressions and 'Nazar' vows, or specific voluntary fasts a person

promises to keep if a particular wish is fulfilled are also known. Fasting on Mondays and Thursdays is highly recommended by Prophet Muhammad.

A lighthearted tale now, to lighten the mood. The story goes that a representation was made by Chitrugupta, record keeper of Yama, the Hindu God of Death, Justice and Afterlife, to Lord Brahma, the God of Creation, and the first deity of the Holy Trinity or 'Trimurti's, along with Vishnu and Shiva, about the embarrassing consequences of the Varalakshmi vrata. The gist of the grievance was that on account of the observance of the ritual, women were succeeding in getting the same husband for seven successive births. The women were happy. Not so, however, their husbands because men, by nature, would like a different wife in each birth. Lord Brahma was in a dilemma, as the vrata was an ancient tradition, regarded holy and desirable. Chanakya, the legendary Indian philosopher, teacher, economist, and royal strategist, known for masterminding the establishment and celebrated famously for his sharp political wisdom, was summoned to assist in the resolution of the crisis. The brilliant Chanakya, as always, came up with a novel and unique solution and suggested that Lord Brahma insist that the boon would be granted to women only on the condition that the mothers-in-law also would be the same in all the births! The ladies observing the tradition, understandably, refused to accept the condition. Both parties, men, and women were happy, not to mention Lord Brahma!

(The writer was formerly Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh)



LETTERS

The Rs 1,600 crore SCCL black hole

Accountability can no longer wait as a staggering, cavernous discrepancy given that nearly 40 lakh tonnes of coal, valued at an estimated ₹1,600 crore, have vanished into thin air from the stockyards of the state-run Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCCL). It came to light after physical inspections of several mining sites reportedly revealed empty, dusty stockyards, directly contradicting official records that boasted of substantial reserves. The opposition was quick to accuse the Congress-led state government of presiding over, or turning a blind eye to, large-scale irregularities and the potential illegal diversion and black-marketing of a vital national resource. In governance, silence is rarely interpreted as neutrality; more often, it is read as complicity or paralysis. As the controversy snowballs, the Telangana government's lack of a detailed, transparent response is only fuelling the narrative of a systemic cover-up. SCCL is a critical pillar of Telangana's industrial and energy backbone. When a resource as heavily regulated and physically massive as coal disappears on this scale, it points to either a catastrophic failure of internal audit mechanisms or a deeply entrenched, highly coordinated network of illicit siphoning. The state leadership must act swiftly to clear the air, because in a democracy, the smoke from such a political storm will not dissipate until the truth is unearthed.

Calicut Krishnan Ramanathan, Ghaziabad-201001

Need to diversify fuel sources

THIS is further your editorial 'India must diversify fuel supply chains despite US-Iran MoU' (THI June 17). It rightly calls for diversifying fuel supply chains, but the larger lesson is to diversify fuel sources. Dependence on imported oil leaves nations vulnerable to geopolitical tensions, shipping disruptions and price volatility. India should accelerate investments in solar, wind, tidal and geothermal energy, which are clean, green, neat, renewable and effectively inexhaustible. Every unit of energy generated domestically strengthens energy security while reducing pollution and import bills. The most durable solution lies in expanding indigenous renewable energy capacity and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Harsh Pawaria, Rohtak

EU is bang on: Strait of Hormuz

The editorial 'India must diversify fuel supply chains despite US-Iran MoU' prudently points out the need for India to be on its guard in expanding energy sources, notwithstanding the MoU being signed between the US and Iran facilitating the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. One prominent point that stands out is that Israel is not a willing entity to this deal. It is quite clear that the MoU is more on Iranian terms as the US wants to end the war in a hurry despite Israel's consternation. India must think in terms of more fuel storages being built to tide over any future crisis. Meanwhile, the EU's view that the Strait of Hormuz must be a free and unhindered sea route without any toll or restrictions is a level-headed proposition that the world wants urgently.

K R Venkata Narasimhan, Madurai

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Merit or birthright? Why Telangana's 'local only' judge demand threatens impartial justice

CHOLLETI

An extraordinary general body of the Telangana High Court Bar Association (THCBA) on Monday passed a resolution requesting that the High Court and the Supreme Court collegium prioritise practising advocates "belonging to Telangana origin only" when recommending names for elevation to the High Court. The resolution invokes themes that resonate across India — representation, social justice and the value of lawyers who have sustained practice in a particular High Court — and raises fundamental legal and constitutional questions about who may be considered for judicial office and how the collegium should weigh 'locality' against merit and other legitimate criteria.

The resolution and the rationale:

According to the association's extraordinary meeting and subsequent resolution, the request calls for the collegium to follow principles of social justice and ensure that elevation to the bench gives "proper representation to all the sections of people," by prioritising advocates of Telangana origin, who practise in the Telangana High Court. The association's stated concerns are familiar: local advocates are thought to have better knowledge of regional laws, languages, social contexts and institutional practices. Long standing practitioners claim an established relationship with the court and its litigational culture. And a perception exists that too many judicial vacancies are filled by outsiders or by candidates perceived as less connected to local bar and bench communities. These are legitimate policy concerns that speak to questions of trust, accountability and the bench's social composition.

The Legal framework:

The constitutional text sets the outer bounds of eligibility. Article 217 requires a person to have been an advocate of a High Court for at least 10 years to be qualified for appointment as a High Court judge. Article 124 sets similar eligibility for the Supreme Court. These articles impose nationality and experience thresholds but are silent on place of origin or state of enrolment beyond the requirement of practice at a High Court. The Collegium process and the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) — the procedural matrix evolved by the Supreme Court and used by High Court collegia — stress merit, integrity, standing at the Bar, experience, published judgments and encourage regard for social diversity and representation. The MoP contemplates weight being given to professional standing and to consultative inputs from the local bar and judges. It does not, however, endorse categorical exclusion of candidates who are not of a particular state origin.

Precedents and bar-level pushback around locality demands:

Demands by bar associations and local bodies for prioritising local practitioners are not new. Reports show that bar bodies in different jurisdictions in India have protested proposals to elevate advocates, who do not practise regularly before a particular High Court, or asked that local counsel be given preference. Some associations have even threatened abstentions or abstaining from work when they believe consultative norms were ignored. Conversely, proposals to elevate advocates from the Supreme Court or advocates who practise mainly outside a High Court's rolls have also drawn objections. These episodes demonstrate a recurring tension: local bars

want a say and protection for home-grown talent; collegia seek to balance merit, representation and institutional needs.

Legal and constitutional objections to 'TG-only' rule:

A categorical rule that only advocates of Telangana origin may be considered presents myriad problems. First, it risks conflict with equal treatment norms and the constitutional commitment to non-discrimination — appointments must be open to all who meet the constitutional eligibility criteria. Second, the constitution's experience thresholds refer to practice in a High Court. They do not confer a right to geographic exclusion. Third, limiting the pool to state origin advocates may curtail merit: the collegium system, for all its scrutiny, seeks candidates with outstanding ability and temperament. Artificially narrowing that pool could compromise overall judicial quality. Fourth, such a rule may undercut impartial justice by introducing parochial pressures into what is designed to be a consultative but expert process. Finally, the practicalities of modern legal practice — interstate mobility, Supreme Court practice, multi-jurisdictional litigation — mean many of the best candidates have diverse practice footprints that transcend state borders. Constitutional text and the MoP do not support a parochial quota. They permit, instead, a nuanced approach that properly values local experience as one of several factors.

Weighing local practitioners:

That said, the association's concerns have merit when framed as preferences rather than inflexible rules. Local practitioners often bring deep familiarity with state statutes, local languages and socio



legal context — qualities that improve judicial access and legitimacy. Where a High Court has a sustained deficit in representation by persons from particular social classes, castes, genders or regions of the state, active attention to homegrown candidates can promote social justice and public confidence. The collegium legitimately considers representational balance. The MoP expressly mentions social diversity and dispersal as considerations. The answer is not categorical exclusion but calibrated prioritisation: clearer consultative engagement with the local bar, well publicised shortlists that include local talent, and affirmative outreach to underrepresented communities within the state.

Practical recommendations to reconcile local claims and constitutional norms

A balanced way forward would preserve collegial independence while responding to legitimate local anxieties:

The High Court Collegium should publish general criteria it emphasises in each round (e.g., representation, local experience) and record consultative inputs from the bar — without compromising confidential elements of the vetting process.

Rather than an exclusionary demand, the bar association could submit a ranked shortlist of local advocates with verified credentials and judgments for the collegium's consideration; this preserves the collegium's final discretion while ensuring local talent is visible. The MoP could be clarified —

through collegium practice directions or a public memorandum — to state how local practice and regional representation are weighed against other parameters.

To address social justice goals, the collegium and state authorities should foster mentorship and training programmes that increase the pipeline of high quality, diverse candidates from within the state.

If the bar fears opacity or perceived unfairness, it should press for greater procedural transparency (publication of non-sensitive selection criteria and anonymised statistics on regional representation) rather than exclusionary membership rules.

Preference, not parochialism, should guide reform:

The Telangana Bar Association's demand reflects anxieties that many state bars across India have voiced: the desire for local representation, social justice and an accessible bench that understands regional problems. Those concerns merit serious engagement by the collegium and reformers. But constitutional structure, the Memorandum of Procedure, and the imperatives of judicial quality caution against categorical rules that close the candidate pool by place of origin. The healthier path is a principled, transparent consultative regime in which local experience is an honoured, measurable factor — one among several — that the collegium publicly recognises and actively cultivates, while retaining its constitutional duty to recommend judges on the basis of merit, integrity and the public interest.

(The writer is with the Cholleti Black-Robe Chambers, Hyderabad, and writes on economy, politics and law)

BENGALURU ONLINE

Cabinet expansion decision rests with high command: Ahmed

BENGALURU: Amid growing political buzz over the Legislative Council elections and the much-anticipated Cabinet expansion in Karnataka, senior Congress leader and former minister Zameer Ahmed Khan met former MP D.K. Suresh in Bengaluru on Wednesday, triggering fresh speculation in political circles.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Zameer Ahmed said the Congress is a high-command-driven party and all decisions regarding Cabinet expansion will be taken by the party leadership. "I was expecting a ministerial berth in the first list, but it did not happen. I am hopeful of finding a place in the second list. Even if that does not happen, I have no disappointment. I have never publicly demanded a ministerial position.

My supporters have staged protests seeking representation for me, which is natural," he said. Rejecting reports of dissatisfaction, Zameer asked reporters whether his face reflected any disappointment. He also highlighted his proximity to the party leadership, stating that he had actively campaigned for the Congress during elections in Kerala and Telangana. On the upcoming Legislative Council election, Zameer expressed confidence about the Congress securing victory. Referring to the Congress Legislature Party meeting held at a resort in Bidadi, he said around 140 legislators were united behind the party candidates. "We are fully united. Even if 28 legislators vote for a candidate, victory is assured.

Read more at <https://epaper.thehansindia.com>



Students and staff gather at the MJP AP BC Welfare Residential School for Girls in Nasanakota

Nasanakota MJP School upgraded to Inter level; MPC, BiPC admissions open

- Thanks to repeated representations by Raptadu MLA Paritala Sunitha, the state government issued GO No 6 upgrading the residential school, ensuring rural girls in the backward Ramagiri mandal no longer drop out after Class X
- The institution has launched first-year admissions with 40 seats each in MPC and BiPC streams.
- The long-standing demand of the region has been fulfilled, allowing rural girl students to pursue higher secondary education safely within their vicinity
- MLA Paritala Sunitha extended gratitude to Chief Minister Naidu, Education Minister Nara Lokesh, and BC Welfare Minister Savitha for fast-tracking the sanction

HANS NEWS SERVICE RAPTADU

IN a major boost to rural girl child education, the Andhra Pradesh Government has officially upgraded the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule (MJP) AP BC Welfare Residential School for Girls in Nasanakota to the Intermediate level. The decision will allow students from the backward Ramagiri mandal to pursue higher secondary education locally starting this current academic year. The development follows persistent efforts by Raptadu MLA Paritala Sunitha, who had repeatedly pushed the state government to address the lack of local post-secondary options for rural girls. Following her representations, the government issued GO No 6, formally sanctioning the upgrade. Previously, local girls had access to institutional education only up to Class X, forcing many to discontinue their studies

due to the absence of nearby residential colleges. As per the government order, first-year Intermediate classes will commence immediately. The institution is offering 40 seats each in the MPC (Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry) and BiPC (Biology, Physics, Chemistry) streams. The application process rolled out on Wednesday, with eligibility set for students who secured 500 marks and above in their recent Class X board examinations. Expressing her gratitude, MLA Paritala Sunitha thanked Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Education Minister Nara Lokesh, and BC Welfare Minister Savitha for approving the project. She noted that the school's students have historically maintained excellent academic records and urged the teaching faculty to work towards establishing the upgraded institution as a model educational center in the district.

Kurnool techie among 12 killed in tragic US skydiving plane crash

- Sai Karthik Varma (26), a software engineer based in Kansas and the only son of a migrant family from Thumbiganur village, died when a small recreational aircraft suffered a technical fault and crashed on Sunday
- The family, originally from Bhimavaram before settling in Kurnool district three decades ago, was shattered by the devastating news, prompting local leaders and neighbors to rush to their home to offer condolences
- The small plane, which was ferrying skydiving enthusiasts to a jump location, burst into flames upon impact after an alleged technical failure, killing all 12 individuals on board
- Karthik was an alumnus of the University of Central Missouri, where he completed his higher education before securing a position as a software professional in Kansas



File photos of Sai Karthik

when the plane allegedly developed a technical fault and crashed. The aircraft burst into flames after impact, killing all 12 people on board. The devastating news was conveyed to the family, confirming that Sai Karthik Varma was among the victims. The sudden demise of their only son has left the family shattered. Relatives said Sai Karthik Varma had been supporting his parents while building a promising career in the United States, making the loss even more heartbreaking. The tragic incident has sent shockwaves through Thumbiganur village, where neighbours, well-wishers, and local leaders have been expressing their sympathies and extending support to the grieving family.

HANS NEWS SERVICE KURNOL

NEWS of a tragic plane crash that occurred in the United States on June 15 came to light on Wednesday, bringing grief to a family from Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh. Sai Karthik Varma (26), son of Datla Subrahmanyam

Raju and Padmavathi of Thumbiganur village in Kosigi mandal, was among those killed in the accident. The incident has cast a shadow of sorrow over the village, with local leaders and residents visiting the bereaved family to offer their condolences. According to family members, Datla

Subrahmanyam Raju and Padmavathi are originally from Bhimavaram in coastal Andhra Pradesh. Nearly three decades ago, the family migrated to Thumbiganur village in Kosigi mandal and settled there. Their only son, Sai Karthik Varma, moved to the United States to pursue higher education. He completed his

graduation at the University of Central Missouri and later secured a software engineering job, residing in the state of Kansas. On Sunday, June 15, Sai Karthik Varma reportedly joined a recreational skydiving activity. He was travelling in a small aircraft carrying participants to the skydiving location

Student JAC demands fee regulation committee in State

HANS NEWS SERVICE ANANTAPUR

TERMINING the unchecked fee hikes by private and corporate educational institutions a form of financial exploitation, the Andhra Pradesh Student Joint Action Committee (JAC) on Wednesday urged the State Government to immediately set up a Fee Regulation Committee to protect parents. Addressing reporters at a press conference at the JAC district office in Ananta Nagar, Student JAC District President Amar Yadav expressed deep concern over the aggressive commercialization of education. He highlighted that several corporate schools are demanding an astronomical ₹1 lakh to ₹1.5 lakh annually for fresh first-grade admissions alone, hiding the hikes under specialized programs, multi-media classrooms, and advanced curriculum tags. "Education cannot be allowed to turn into a pure commercial business. The state must step in to ensure that schooling remains affordable and equitable



Members of the Andhra Pradesh Student JAC addressing a press conference in Anantapur

across all socio-economic strata," Yadav said. He strongly advocated for Andhra Pradesh to introduce a dedicated, high-power Fee Regulation Committee modeled after the strict regulatory framework currently running in neighboring Tamil Nadu to oversee private school fee structures and penalize institutional irregularities. The student leader warned that the absence of structured state oversight has given corporate managements a free hand to pressure families. He demanded an immediate audit of non-transparent fee collections across the district. District JAC Secretary Velugu Prashanth, along with committee members Ravi, Govind, and Yashwanth, were present at the briefing.



Collector O Anand and RDT AF-EC Director Dr YV Malla Reddy, and officials inspect climate-resilient farming demonstrations, agricultural exhibits and natural farming stalls during a farmers' conference on World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought in Anantapur on Wednesday

Action Fraterna conclave maps out climate-resilient blueprint for 500 farmers

HANS NEWS SERVICE ANANTAPUR

ASSERTING that the district holds the unique potential to establish itself as a pioneering national benchmark for sustainable agriculture, District Collector O Anand on Wednesday announced a massive expansion drive to scale natural farming across two lakh acres by next year. He was addressing a large congregation of nearly 500 farmers and agri-experts at a conference organized by the Action Fraterna-Ecology Centre (AF-EC) to mark the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2026. The Collector noted that eco-friendly farming is currently thriving on 85,000 acres in the district. To insulate the region from recurring drought, the administration has locked a target to execute the Pre-Monsoon Dry Sowing (PMDS) program across two lakh acres during the ongoing Kharif cycle,

alongside reclaiming 35,000 acres of unused fallow land. AF-EC Director Dr YV Malla Reddy emphasized that rapidly shifting monsoon timelines necessitate a total transition to climate-resilient farming, which his center has successfully implemented across 12 pilot villages. Adding an agro-forestry dimension to the drive, Conservator of Forests R Yashodabai announced that the department is ready with 10 lakh specialized saplings for distribution starting July 1. She urged farmers to plant neem and pongamia varieties, which serve as foundational raw materials for home-brewed bio-fertilizers. Accompanied by top line-department heads including District Agriculture Officer N Salu Reddy and District Horticulture Officer Umadevi, the Collector toured the specialized exhibition stalls demonstrating seed-ball production and water-harvesting machinery.

YSRCP cry foul over 'flawed' voter list revision

KADAPA: The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has alleged that the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls across Andhra Pradesh lacks basic transparency and is being systematically manipulated to purge opposition party supporters from voter lists. Addressing the media here on Wednesday, former deputy chief minister Amjad Basha and former MLA S Raghurami Reddy stated that the entire revision exercise is riddled with errors and is disproportionately targeting regions where the YSRCP commands a significant base. The opposition leaders strongly questioned the reliability of using the 2002 voter list as a baseline reference, pointing out that it

contains severe omissions and inconsistencies. To substantiate their claims, they revealed that names of several long-term residents—including members of their own families and villages—were completely missing from the rolls despite living at the same addresses for decades. Raghurami Reddy further noted that missing door numbers on the reference lists have created severe complications during fieldwork. He alleged that Booth Level Officers (BLOs) are failing to conduct comprehensive door-to-door verifications and that the personnel deployed lack the technical knowledge to fill out the required documentation accurately.

Collector opens Aadhaar enrolment centre; warns against docs forgery

HANS NEWS SERVICE ANANTAPUR

TO eliminate long-distance travel for identity verification services, District Collector O Anand on Wednesday inaugurated a newly established Aadhaar Enrolment Centre in Anantapur city. The facility is located at the PR Residency building, situated beside Chandra Hospital behind the local RTC Bus Stand. Addressing the gathering, the Collector emphasized that the primary motive behind this urban facility is providing seamless, citizen-friendly services to vulnerable demographics, including senior citizens, rural folk, and students. He announced that



Collector O Anand inaugurating the newly established Aadhaar Enrolment Centre in Anantapur on Wednesday

the centre brings top-tier biometric and data management services—previously restricted to major cities like Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Kakinada—directly to Anantapur residents. The complex features dedicated counters for

fresh enrolments, mobile number linkage, address modifications, and biometric updates. Issuing a stern policy directive, Collector Anand warned against any attempts to secure registrations through fraudulent methods or falsified certificates.

He ordered the center's executives to instantly report document forgery to his office, reiterating that individuals involved in fabricating applications would face severe legal prosecution. The facility will function from 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM on all working days, remaining open year-round except on public festival holidays. During his inaugural tour, the Collector inspected the token distribution counters and reviewed operational workflows by initiating his own data-update sequence. The event was attended by UIDAI Supervising Officer Javed, Regional Manager Mahadev, Operations Manager Prasad, and local Tahsildar Raja.

Kurnool gears up for June 28 national pulse polio drive

- Health teams will launch intense door-to-door tracking operations on Monday and Tuesday to vaccinate any children under five who miss the primary booth phase on Sunday
- To maximize coverage for moving populations, dedicated vaccination booths will be set up at all local Anganwadi centers and schools, alongside special mobile units at bus terminals and railway stations
- Immunization Officer and Public Health Officer confirm that the June 28 drive targets all children from newborns up to five years of age
- The specialized briefing session trained urban secretariat health workers, medical officers from all urban primary health centers (UPHCs), and field supervisors to execute the campaign

HANS NEWS SERVICE KURNOL

A training programme on the Pulse Polio vaccination campaign was held on Wednesday at the New Lecture Gallery Auditorium in the Kurnool Medical College premises. The session was organized

for urban ward health workers of Kurnool town as part of the preparations for the upcoming National Pulse Polio Programme. Speaking on the occasion, Immunization Officer Dr Uma emphasized the importance of ensuring the success of the upcoming nationwide

Urban health workers trained at KMC auditorium



Immunization Officer Dr Uma addressing ward health workers on pulse polio vaccination campaign on Wednesday

Pulse Polio drive scheduled for June 28. She stated that all eligible children must be administered polio drops without fail. She also highlighted that arrangements have been made to set up vaccination booths in Anganwadi

centres, schools, as well as special mobile vaccination units at key public locations such as bus stands and railway stations to ensure wider coverage. Public Health Officer Dr Raghu also addressed the participants and appealed for full participation in the

campaign. He urged that all children from newborns up to five years of age must be administered two drops of polio vaccine during the programme scheduled on the 28th. He further stated that for children who miss

vaccination on Sunday, health teams will conduct door-to-door visits on Monday and Tuesday to ensure complete coverage. He stressed that the initiative is crucial for safeguarding the bright future of children and achieving 100 percent immunization targets. The programme also included detailed instructions on the administration of polio drops and necessary precautions to be taken during the vaccination process. Medical officers from urban primary health centres, secretariat health workers, field supervisors Shiva, Paul, and Mohan, along with projectionist Khaleel, participated in the training session. Officials reiterated their commitment to making the Pulse Polio campaign a complete success in the district.

Medicover completes over 400 cardiothoracic surgeries

HANS NEWS SERVICE NELLORE

Dr S Vigna Charan announced that the Department of Cardiothoracic & Vascular Surgery at Medicover Hospitals, Nellore — which provides advanced medical care for complex heart, lung and chest-related conditions — has successfully performed over 400 cardiothoracic surgeries with a success rate of 99.5%. Medical officers from urban primary health centres, secretariat health workers, field supervisors Shiva, Paul, and Mohan, along with projectionist Khaleel, participated in the training session. Officials reiterated their commitment to making the Pulse Polio campaign a complete success in the district.

Briefing the media here on Wednesday, he said that these surgeries included Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting (CABG), heart valve replacement, minimally invasive cardiac surgeries, and procedures for congenital heart defects. He attributed these achievements to the availability of modern technology, a dedicated Cardiac ICU, and a team of experienced doctors. Center Head Lavanya was also present.





Emotional availability is the new attraction: The rise of affectional dating

ASKARI JAFFER

Cool indifference, mystery, and emotional distance were once rewarded in the dating culture. The less invested you were, the more desirable you seemed. But that dynamic has quietly collapsed. Daters have come a long way, and they have emotionally matured. Modern singles are no longer chasing emotionally unavailable matches. 8 out of 10 single men and women from metros and suburbs explained that dating someone who isn't emotionally available for you can leave you feeling drained, confused, and constantly looking for clues and overanalysing every interaction trying to figure out whether they are in it for the long haul. Today, users are attracted towards emotional openness, consistent effort, and intentional communication. The new-age daters call it Affectional Dating.

Ravi Mittal, the Founder and CEO of India's most popular dating app

QuackQuack, commented, "Emotional availability came out as the strongest action trigger among the Tier 1, 2, and 3 daters in the last two years. From our surveys, we have noticed that more than 55% users lose interest in their match if they are emotionally aloof during the initial days of chatting. That "too cool to care" really doesn't work in modern dating. It's a major reset in online dating. Honestly, this is one of the reasons why the number of intentional matches on online dating platforms has risen."

End of the "Cool And Unbothered" Era

Less is more; that's not a concept the dating world believes in anymore, at least not when it comes to emotional availability. Dating advice has revolved around "no double texting," maintaining emotional distance during the early stages, and keeping an air of mystery to let the spark live longer. But after years of getting stuck in exhausting situationships and decoding dry texts, daters today have

The era of playing "cool and unbothered" in dating is fading, as modern singles increasingly value emotional openness, consistency, and genuine connection over mystery and emotional distance. A new trend called Affectional Dating is reshaping relationships, with daters prioritising vulnerability, intentional communication, and emotional availability from the very beginning

a brand new approach, and it is all about wearing your heart on your sleeve. More and more dating app users are prioritising their match's degree of emotional availability and intentionality over fleeting physical traits.

Vulnerability is not "Too Much"

There's a notable shift in how conversations are progressing on dating apps. Users might be taking their time to commit, but they are not afraid to open up early. Within the first 2 weeks of chatting, most daters already

start discussing emotional expectations, mental health management, baggage from past experience, boundaries, and even their relationship needs. This might have seemed too vulnerable too soon a few years back, but with the changing dating style, emotional openness from the beginning is becoming the norm. Over 41% of men and women in their 20s shared that pretending to be emotionally unaffected at all times and trying to keep up the wall while connecting with someone is exhausting.



Comeback of Affection

Five years back, showing affection openly was almost reduced to being cringe. People were cautious about when and where they are

being affectionate, especially on dating apps where connections happen virtually and one wrong move can make you seem unnecessarily clingy or needy. Most daters

would intentionally play cool to hold the upper hand in the connection. But the mentality has shifted dramatically in the last two years, when online matches are more

openly expressing their interest without worrying if they come off "desperate." The rise of Affectional Dating makes it easier for people to be their authentic selves.

LOOK OUT

Meet the artisans



Some art forms don't belong in museums. They belong in homes, in daily conversations, and in the hands of people who appreciate the story behind the object.

MAATI - The Crafts School, an initiative by Kadam India supported by the Tata Trusts, is bringing an immersive two-day showcase to Hyderabad in partnership with Mysore Saree Udyog. The exhibition celebrates the living traditions of hand-painted Madhubani art alongside contemporary Bihar craftsmanship. This curated exhibit is designed for textile connoisseurs, art and culture tastemakers, conscious textile retailers, architects, interior designers, collectors, and anyone drawn to authentic legacy artistry.

The heart of the showcase is four women artisans traveling from MAATI's clusters in Madhubani and Darbhanga.

This is a rare opportunity to meet the makers and engage directly with their creative processes and explore handcrafted textile collections that bridge generations of visual memory with contemporary living.

Beyond design, the exhibition carries a real-world urgency. MAATI works in regions of Bihar where

MAATI showcases Madhubani art and contemporary Bihar crafts in Hyderabad

recurring climate and environmental challenges threaten traditional ways of life year after year.

By creating direct market access and nurturing independent creative enterprises, the initiative supports artisan communities in building long-term, climate-resilient livelihoods.

The event offers a unique platform for Hyderabad's art, design, and textile community to engage with authentic handcrafted traditions while supporting artisan-led enterprises and the preservation of India's rich cultural heritage.

Dates: 19th and 20th June 2026.
Venue: MSU Store, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad.



Women led startups at India's first SHElterTech Accelerator organised by We Hub

WE Hub concludes India's First SHElterTech accelerator

WE Hub, India's first state-led nodal agency for women entrepreneurs, has successfully concluded the SHElterTech Acceleration Program, a first-of-its-kind initiative designed to position women founders at the forefront of innovation in the housing and construction sector.

Implemented in partnership with the Terwilliger Center for Innovation in Shelter (TCIS), specialised center within the global nonprofit organisation Habitat for Humanity International, the program culminated in a Cohort Showcase and Industry Networking Meet that brought together Telangana's leading real estate developers, CSR foundations, architects, institutional investors and government stakeholders.

The closing ceremony was graced by VP Gautham, IAS, Managing Director, Telangana Housing Corporation Limited (THCL), as the Chief Guest.

The cohort featured innovative startups including Q Gen-Next Sustainable Technology Pvt. Ltd., Hubeco Green Ventures Pvt. Ltd., C-DISC Technologies Pvt. Ltd., Structural Integrated Panels Pvt. Ltd., Greenbanana Environment Solutions Pvt. Ltd., and ECOSTP Technologies Pvt. Ltd.

Addressing the gathering, VP Gautham, IAS, said: "The Government of Telangana is committed to expanding

affordable housing in urban areas and improving the quality of homes in rural communities. Achieving this vision requires smarter construction solutions that reduce costs, improve efficiency and shorten project timelines. Startups are critical partners in this journey. The innovators in this cohort are solving real-world challenges and developing practical solutions that can make a meaningful impact. We are ready to work with them."

SHElterTech was conceptualised to address a critical gap identified through the SHElterTech Gender Analysis Study, which found that women entrepreneurs in the housing and construction sector often face barriers not in technical expertise or ambition, but in accessing markets, capital and industry networks.

In response, WE Hub designed a focused Growth and Market Activation Program aimed at creating tangible business opportunities through customer pilots, strategic partnerships, investment access and regulatory support.

The cohort showcased a diverse range of innovations spanning modular construction systems, zero-excavation foundations, passive cooling technologies, sustainable building materials and nature-based water treatment solutions. These innovations align closely with Telangana's vision of creating faster,

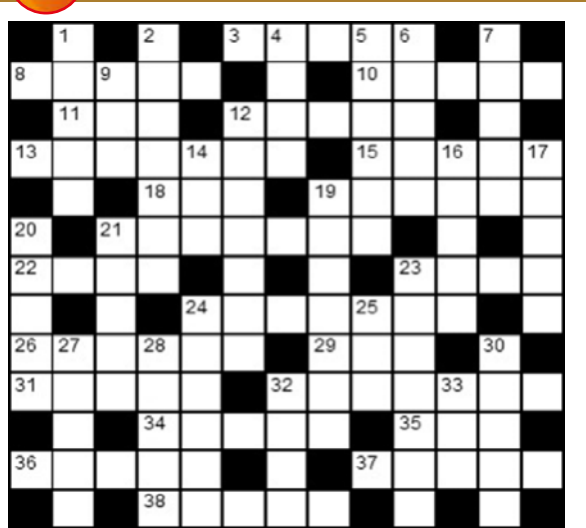
greener and more sustainable housing infrastructure.

A key highlight of the program was structured business matchmaking, enabling founders to engage directly with enterprise buyers, developers, CSR partners and investors, transforming networking opportunities into potential pilot projects and commercial partnerships.

Reflecting on the program's impact, Sita Pallacholla, CEO, WE Hub, said: "Women founders in the housing sector consistently told us that while they had the capability and innovative solutions, they lacked access to customers, capital and decision-makers. Bridging that gap is exactly why WE Hub exists. SHElterTech demonstrates what becomes possible when women entrepreneurs are provided with the right ecosystem, opportunities and connections to scale."

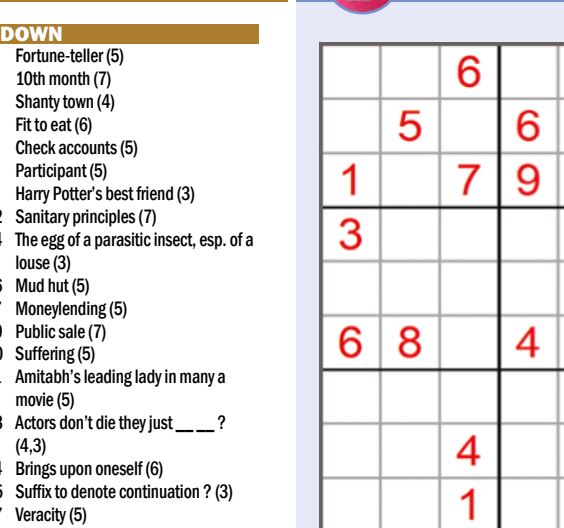
The event was also attended by Soumya Chanda, Executive Director, Vasavi Group, along with representatives from leading real estate firms, investors and ecosystem partners. With the successful completion of SHElterTech, WE Hub reinforces its commitment to fostering inclusive innovation and ensuring that women-led enterprises play a pivotal role in shaping Telangana's housing sector, economic growth and sustainable development.

CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 3 Pale green mosslike lichen (5)
 - 8 Around (5)
 - 10 A dolt or a dullard (5)
 - 11 Automated online program (3)
 - 12 Moist (5)
 - 13 A word that means the same (7)
 - 15 Jewel, trinket (5)
 - 18 Large (3)
 - 19 Sacrificial tables (6)
 - 21 Entourage (7)
 - 22 One feeling remorseful or one
 - 23 Just (4)
 - 24 First (7)
 - 26 Petroleum byproduct (6)
 - 29 Our country, abbr. (3)
 - 31 Former French coin (5)
 - 32 Power to convince (7)
 - 34 Italian city (5)
 - 35 Yes for Yves? (3)
 - 36 Ringo ___ of the Beatles (5)
 - 37 Babble (3,2)
 - 38 English county (5)

SUDOKU



- DOWN**
- 1 Fortune-teller (5)
 - 2 10th month (7)
 - 4 Shanty town (4)
 - 5 Fit to eat (6)
 - 6 Check accounts (5)
 - 7 Participant (5)
 - 9 Harry Potter's best friend (3)
 - 12 Sanitary principles (7)
 - 14 The egg of a parasitic insect, esp. of a louse (3)
 - 16 Mud hut (5)
 - 17 Moneylending (5)
 - 19 Public sale (7)
 - 20 Suffering (5)
 - 21 Amitabh's leading lady in many a movie (5)
 - 23 Actors don't die they just ___? (4,3)
 - 24 Brings upon oneself (6)
 - 25 Suffix to denote continuation? (3)
 - 27 Veracity (5)
 - 28 Cave (5)
 - 30 Offspring (5)
 - 32 Refer to (4)
 - 33 Religious sister (3)

Solution to June 17



Solution to June 17



Why the first five years form the most critical stage of learning and development

SIBI FAKIH

Early childhood is often viewed as a stage before “real education” begins. However, findings from developmental science and decades of research suggest that the first five years of life are not merely preparation for learning; they are the period during which the foundations of learning are established.

The significance of this stage is reflected in the rapid pace of growth that takes place during these years. The first 1,000 days, from conception to around a child’s second birthday, are recognised by international agencies such as WHO and UNICEF as a critical period for growth and development. The years that follow continue this process, extending into roughly the first 3,000 days of life and influencing brain development, cognitive abilities, emotional regulation, physical health, and social skills.

Research indicates that most neural connections are formed during the first few years, with nearly 85 per cent of brain development occurring before the age of five.

Experiences during this period can have lasting effects on how children learn, communicate, and interact with the world around them. Learning begins well before children encounter formal instruction. It develops through everyday experiences involving touch, language, play, movement, and secure relationships with caregivers.

This understanding has gained greater relevance in recent years. Developmental challenges are no longer confined to disadvantaged communities. While poverty and malnutrition continue to affect many children, concerns are increasingly emerging across socioeconomic groups. Excessive screen exposure, reduced physical activity, childhood obesity, delayed social development, emotional difficulties, and behavioural concerns are being observed among children from diverse backgrounds.

These trends highlight the importance of distinguishing academic readiness from developmental readiness. Early learning is not



limited to acquiring literacy and numeracy skills. It also includes developing communication abilities, emotional security, self-regulation, curiosity, and social competence. Healthy development depends on adequate nutrition, responsive caregiving, opportunities for play, movement, and language-rich environments.

Evidence from longitudinal studies has consistently shown that children who receive appropriate nutrition, emotional support, and

cognitive stimulation during the early years are more likely to perform better in school, develop essential life skills, and participate productively in society later in life. These outcomes underline the importance of viewing early childhood as an integral part of human development rather than simply the beginning of formal education.

One challenge, however, is that structured learning and developmental support often begin relatively late. For many children, organised services become

available only through preschools or Anganwadis when they are around two-and-a-half to three years old. By that stage, much of the most rapid phase of brain development has already taken place. This highlights the importance of supporting children and families from the earliest stages of life.

Parents and caregivers play a particularly important role during this period. Research has demonstrated that simple and consistent interactions such as talking, reading,

singing, playing, and responding to a child’s cues contribute significantly to brain development and language acquisition. These activities do not require specialised resources but rely primarily on responsive and nurturing relationships.

Educational institutions also have an important role to play. Early childhood programmes need to support children’s overall development rather than focus exclusively on academic outcomes. Health, nutrition, emotional well-being, play, and learning are interconnected and should be viewed as complementary aspects of child development.

Teachers and caregivers working with young children benefit from an understanding of developmental milestones and the ways children learn during the early years. Knowledge of emotional development, communication, and age-appropriate learning practices can help create environments that support children’s growth and well-being. Addressing the needs of young children also requires collaboration across sectors. Health, nutrition, education, and



- Early childhood lays the foundation for lifelong learning, with nearly 85% of brain development occurring in the first five years.
- The first 1,000 days are critical, shaping future health, cognition, and emotional well-being.
- Modern childhood faces emerging risks, including excessive screen exposure, inactivity, obesity, and delayed social development.
- Parents are a child’s first teachers, and everyday interactions significantly influence development.
- Investing early is essential for Viksit Bharat 2047, requiring coordinated action across education, health, nutrition, and family support.

social support systems are closely linked during the early years. Strengthening coordination among different agencies and

community institutions can help ensure that children and families receive comprehensive support during this critical phase.



UoH alumni-led ATGC biotech showcases sustainable agri-tech at Bharat Innovates 2026 in France

HYDERABAD: The University of Hyderabad (UoH) alumni network found representation on the global stage as ATGC Biotech Pvt. Ltd., co-founded by two former students of the university, participated in Bharat Innovates 2026, an international showcase of India’s deep-tech ecosystem held in Nice, France, from June 14 to 16.

ATGC Biotech was among 120 high-potential startups selected to showcase India’s advances in biotechnology, healthcare, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, sustainability, space technology and advanced manufacturing. The event was organised alongside India-France bilateral engagements during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to France.

The company was founded by Dr. Markandeya Gorantla and Dr. V.B. Reddy, both alumni of the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Hyderabad.

Dr. Markandeya Gorantla completed his Ph.D. in Plant Sciences between 2000 and 2004 and earlier served as a Senior Research Fellow in the Department

He currently serves as Chairman and Managing Director of ATGC Biotech. Dr. V.B. Reddy obtained his M.Sc. in Plant Sciences, completed an Advanced Post-Graduate Diploma in Bioinformatics and later earned his Ph.D. in Plant Sciences from the university. He is the Executive Director of the company.

Established in Genome Valley, Hyderabad, ATGC Biotech focuses on pheromone-based crop protection technologies aimed at supporting sustainable agriculture. The company develops alternatives to conventional insecticides by using species-specific pheromone signals to manage insect populations.

During the event in Nice, the company announced two international collaborations. It exchanged a licensing agreement with Albaugh Europe, a division of the US-headquartered Albaugh Group, for six crop protection products based on ATGC’s patented CREMIT pheromone technology platform.

ATGC Biotech also strengthened its international presence

through SEMIOPHORE Ltd., a joint venture with Luxembourg Industries Ltd. The venture will focus on developing a portfolio of 18 products tailored for global agricultural markets.

The agreements were exchanged in the presence of Prof. Ajay Kumar Sood, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, and Dr. Manish Diwan, Head of Research Innovation and Science-led Entrepreneurship Development (RFID) at BIRAC. The ATGC delegation also interacted with Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal during the event.

According to the company, its technology has been deployed across more than 200,000 acres and is being commercialised through partnerships in Europe, the Americas and Asia. The participation of the UoH alumni-led enterprise at Bharat Innovates 2026 highlights the growing role of Indian research-driven companies in developing technologies for sustainable agriculture and expanding their presence in international markets.

Today is International Picnic Day Encouraging active play and social bonding

A day of outdoor fun and companionship during a special Picnic Day celebration aimed at encouraging active play and fostering healthy social interactions. The event provides young learners with an opportunity to step outside the classroom and participate in a variety of recreational activities. Through games, group exercises and free play, children were encouraged to stay physically active while developing teamwork and communication skills. A key highlight of the celebration is the picnic lunch, where students share meals and snacks with their friends, creating an atmosphere of friendship and togetherness. Teachers guide the children through interactive activities that promoted cooperation, sharing and positive social behavior. Such experiences play an important role in supporting children’s overall development by combining physical activity with opportunities for social bonding. Spending time outdoors also helps children appreciate nature and develop healthy habits from an early age.

GITAM launches school of education, adds programmes in AI, biotechnology & entrepreneurship

HYDERABAD: GITAM Deemed to be University, Hyderabad, has announced admissions for the academic year 2026-27, introducing a range of new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and launching the GITAM School of Education to strengthen its multidisciplinary academic ecosystem.

Among the key additions this year are four-year integrated B.A. B.Ed. and B.Sc. B.Ed. programmes under the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), a BBA in Entrepreneurship offered in association with the Bower School of Entrepreneurship, B.Sc. Microbiology, M.Sc. Biotechnology, M.Tech. in Robotics and Artificial Intelligence, and M.Pharm. in Industrial Pharmacy, subject to approval by the Pharmacy Council of India.

The university said the new programmes have been designed to address emerging opportunities in areas such as artificial intelligence, life sciences, entrepreneurship and teacher education.

Admissions are open through the GITAM Admission Test (GAT) 2026 and recognised national



Prof Ramesh Vaddi, Dr Richa Sharma, Prof D S Rao, Dr Mamata, Prof Shamuel Tharu, releasing the school of B Ed, brochure in Hyderabad on Wednesday

and state-level entrance examinations, including TG and AP EAPCET, NCET, NATA, JEE, CUET and CAT. Merit-based scholarships of up to 100 per cent, covering tuition fees, food and accommodation, are available for eligible students.

The GAT 2026, a national-level entrance examination conducted by the university, will be held online on June 28, with applications open until June 26.

The Hyderabad campus offers programmes through its Schools of Technology, Science, Business, Humanities

and Social Sciences, Architecture, Pharmacy, Public Policy and the newly established School of Education. Academic offerings span disciplines such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Cyber Security, Biotechnology, Architecture, Psychology, Economics, Media Studies and Teacher Education.

Prof. D. Sambasiva Rao, Pro Vice-Chancellor, GITAM Hyderabad, said, “The launch of the School of Education and the introduction of programmes in Robotics and Artificial Intelligence,

Entrepreneurship and Life Sciences reflect our commitment to preparing students for a rapidly evolving world. Through our Liberal Education framework and multidisciplinary environment, we aim to provide students with opportunities to develop the skills required for future careers.” He added that the university’s Liberal Education framework enables students to combine majors and minors across disciplines, allowing them to pursue personalised learning pathways.

IIM Ranchi to offer 12-week executive programme in product management in Hyd

HYDERABAD: The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ranchi has announced a 12-week Executive Programme in Product Management, which will be offered at its Hyderabad campus from July 18. The programme is being conducted in collaboration with education platform Masai and will be delivered in a fully offline weekend format.

Designed for aspiring product managers, engineers, designers, students and early-career professionals, the programme covers the entire product lifecycle, including



customer discovery, product strategy, roadmap planning, execution, stakeholder management and product analytics. Spread over 72 hours, the programme includes 60 hours of faculty-led sessions by IIM

Ranchi and 12 hours of masterclasses by industry practitioners. Participants will also engage with industry leaders through bi-weekly sessions and undertake a capstone project, culminating in a

final presentation before a panel of faculty members and professionals.

The curriculum provides exposure to commonly used product management, collaboration, analytics and artificial intelligence tools, with a focus on practical application and project-based learning.

Prof. Deepak Kumar Srivastava, Director of IIM Ranchi, said the programme has been designed to provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of the product lifecycle and the skills required to contribute effectively in product-focused roles. Prof.

Manish Bansal, Chairperson of Executive Education and Consulting at IIM Ranchi, said the course combines academic frameworks with practical challenges and industry mentorship to offer participants a hands-on learning experience. The programme will be conducted at the IIM Ranchi Hyderabad campus on weekends. Candidates who have completed Class XII or higher are eligible to apply. Participants who successfully complete the course will receive a certification from IIM Ranchi and a project completion letter for the capstone assignment.

Gill is handling (the captaincy job) very well. His individual performance has also improved a lot. He is one of the finest players; I don't know why they don't select him for T20s. He is a good player for all formats and should never have been dropped from any format, - Mohammed Azharuddin



FIFA WORLD CUP 2026



Kylian Mbappe reacts after scoring a goal

Messi scores a hat-trick triumph

KANSAS CITY

LIONEL Messi celebrated his record-breaking sixth World Cup appearance with a hat-trick, powering defending champions Argentina to a comfortable 3-0 win over Algeria in a FIFA World Cup 2026 Group J opener at the Kansas City Stadium on Wednesday.

In the process, Messi equalled the all-time FIFA World Cup goalscoring record with his 16 World Cup goals, tying Miroslav Klose of Germany. He also notably holds the records for most caps (199) and most goals (117) for Argentina, while also holding the international record for most World Cup match appearances (26) and being the only player to score in the World Cup group stage, round of 16, quarterfinals, semifinals and final.

Messi started the day three adrift of Miroslav Klose's mark of 16 goals on the global stage, but within 76 minutes of this match he

was on level terms with the former Germany international.

Messi and Algeria's Fares Chaibi both had efforts ruled out for offside in a breathless opening, but Argentina's captain fantastic soon made his mark. Picking up possession 30 yards from goal, he expertly rolled his marker, surged forward and curled a superb finish beyond the grasp of Luca Zidane.

Algeria largely kept the reigning champions at arm's length for the rest of the half, with an Alexis Mac Allister header over the crossbar Argentina's only real chance.

Anis Hadj Moussa carved out one of the Fennec Foxes' better opening moments earlier, but a deflection took the sting out of his low effort and Emiliano Martinez gathered comfortably.

Messi was once again at the heart of Argentina's brightest attacking moments after the break. He first flashed a 20-yard effort over the bar before slipping in Lautaro Martinez, whose

dangerous cross was cut out by Zidane.

The Argentina talisman's second goal soon followed, with Zidane unable to hold Mac Allister's powerful strike, allowing Messi to pounce on the rebound and finish coolly with his right foot.

The 38-year-old completed his hat-trick with a trademark curling finish from the edge of the area, capping his 200th senior international appearance in style.

In his historic international career, Messi has guided Argentina to the 2021 and 2024 CONMEBOL Copa America titles and 2022 CONMEBOL-UEFA Cup of Champions crown and further cemented his legacy by leading his country to a historic FIFA World Cup title in 2022.

Having equalled Klose's record, Messi will have the chance to claim it outright when Argentina face Austria on June 22. Algeria, meanwhile, take on Jordan in their next Group J outing.

Mbappe sparks in France's 3-1 win over Senegal

EAST RUTHERFORD (US):

Kylian Mbappe scored twice to move past Pele and Lionel Messi with 14 World Cup goals, Bradley Barcola added another as France rebounded from a surprisingly poor first half to beat Senegal 3-1 Tuesday in its opener.

Mbappe had 14 touches in the scoreless first half, the fewest of any player, then showed his brilliance when he put Les Bleus ahead in the 66th minute. He burst past Senegal captain Kalidou Koulibaly, turned onto a diagonal pass from Michael Olise and slid the ball past goalkeeper Edouard Mendy from just outside the 6-yard box.

Barcola entered in the 80th and doubled the lead two minutes later, running onto Adrien Rabiot's through ball and lifting the ball past Mendy for his fourth international goal. Senegal forward Ibrahim Mbeye cut the deficit with an angled shot five minutes into stoppage time.

Mbappe then had a spectacular long-range goal a minute later, over Mendy's outstretched arm and just under the crossbar. Mbappe moved one ahead of Messi and Just Fontaine on the World Cup career scoring list and is tied with Germany's Gerd Muller, trailing only Brazil's Ronaldo (15) and Germany's Miroslav Klose (16).

RESULTS

- France 3 Senegal 1
- Iraq 1 Norway 4
- Argentina 3 Algeria 0
- Austria 3 Jordan 1
- Portugal vs Congo DR 10:30 pm

Fixtures (in IST)

ON THURSDAY

- England vs Croatia 1:30 am at AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas
- Ghana vs Panama 4:30 am at BMO Field, Toronto, Canada
- Uzbekistan vs Colombia 7:30 am at Estadio Banorte, Mexico City, Mexico
- Czechia vs South Africa 9:30 pm at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta, Georgia

ON FRIDAY

- Switzerland vs Bosnia-Herzegovina 12:30 am at SoFi Stadium, Inglewood, California
- Canada vs Qatar 3:30 am at BC Place, Vancouver, Canada
- Mexico vs South Korea 6:30 am at Estadio Akron, Guadalajara, Mexico

Women's T20 WC

India hammer Netherlands by 95 runs for second win in row

LEEDS: India continued their winning run in the Women's T20 World Cup, crushing the Netherlands by 95 runs after posting a formidable 209 for five and then bowling out the opposition for 114 in 17.3 overs.

Young left-arm spinner Shree Charani led the charge with impressive figures of 4/19, while seamer Nandini Sharma, drafted in place of Arundhati Reddy, made an immediate impact with 2/22.

Part-time spinner Shafali Verma wrapped up the tail taking two in three balls to return with 3/20 in 3.2 overs.

Earlier, Smriti Mandhana and Shafali stitched together a 115-run opening stand as India posted 209/5 after the Netherlands elected to field.

BRIEF SCORES:

India: 209/5 in 20 overs (Smriti Mandhana 74, Shafali Verma 55; Caroline de Lange 2/32) beat The Netherlands 114; 17.3 overs (Babette de Leede 28; Shree Charani 4/19, Shafali Verma 3/20, Nandini Sharma 2/22) by 95 runs.

Tri-series: India A crush Afghanistan A by 101 runs

DAMBULLA: A compelling all-round performance helped India A thrash Afghanistan A by 101 runs here on Wednesday, bolstering their chances of making the tri-series final.

After amassing 319 for nine riding on fifties by skipper Tilak Varma, Priyansh Arya and Kumar Kushagra, India A bowlers produced a unified show to bundle out Afghanistan A for mere 218 in 36.5 overs.

Nishant Sindhu was the pick of the bowlers as he returned 4/31 from his 6.5 overs, while pacer Yash Thakur claimed 2/48 from his seven overs. Anshul

Kamboj, Vipraj Nigam, Suryansh Shedge, and Anukul Roy claimed one wicket apiece.

For Afghanistan, Bahir Shah (57 off 52 balls; 4 fours, 1 six) and Faisal Shinozoda (46) provided some resistance but most of their batters failed to convert their starts.

BRIEF SCORES:

India A: 319/9 in 50 overs (Tilak Varma 59, Priyansh Arya 58, Kumar Kushagra 58; Abdollah Ahmadzai 2/62) beat Afghanistan A 218 in 36.5 overs (Faisal Shinozoda 46, Bahir Shah 57; Nishant Sindhu 4/31, Yash Thakur 2/48) by 101 runs.

India seal ODI series with 170-run win

LUCKNOW: Captain Shubman Gill battled intense heat and cramps to produce a masterful 154, while the increasingly confident Ishan Kishan scored a statement century as India recorded a dominant 170-run win over Afghanistan in the second ODI here on Wednesday to seal the series.

India have taken a 2-0 unassailable lead in the three-match series. Afghanistan's decision to bowl first under the scorching afternoon sun backfired as Gill and Kishan, who scored his second ODI hundred in his comeback series, helped India put up a formidable 402.

The conditions were very demanding through out



the game with several players struggling with cramps while Gill also battled with an ice collar. In fact, the Indian skipper didn't return to the field once he got out.

BRIEF SCORES:

India: 402 all out in 49.5 overs (Shubman Gill 154, Ishan Kishan 125; N Kharote 4/76). Afghanistan: 232 all out in 44.3 overs (Rahmat Shah 79, Sediqullah Atal 42, Rahmanullah Gurbaz 41; Arshdeep Singh 3/45, Gurnoor Brar 3/60).

Hyderabad Heroes bag first win; Mumbai Dreamers stay unbeaten

Rugby Premier League Day 2

HYDERABAD: The second day of the Rugby Premier League season 2 witnessed hosts Hyderabad Heroes, and Mumbai Dreamers register wins at the Ganti Mohana Chandra Balayogi Athletic Stadium, Gachibowli, Hyderabad on Wednesday.

Hyderabad Heroes beat Delhi Redz 31-17 (men)

Looking to bounce back from their opening defeat, Hyderabad Heroes made a flying

start through Sumit Kumar and Maurice Longbottom. Despite sustained pressure from Delhi Redz, Taitaifono Tavita extended the Heroes' advantage before Luciano Gonzalez and Javed Husain brought the Redz back into the contest. Tavita struck again in the second half, while Patrick Odongo kept Delhi in the hunt. However, Wolfram Hacker's late

try sealed the victory for the Heroes. Mumbai Dreamers defeat Bengaluru Bravehearts 19-7 (men) Dreamers applied pressure on the Bravehearts early to gain territory. Bravehearts sustained the pressure but Lucas Mignot sprinted end to end to open the score with a try for Dreamers. Guillaume Bouche backed it up with another try for the Dreamers at the end of the first quarter.



Person of Indian origin hits jackpot of Rs. 5.5 cr in UAE

ABU DHABI: A person of Indian origin in Abu Dhabi, Shajeer vanga, has hit a jackpot of Rs. 5.5 crore in the UAE millionaire campaign conducted by the Sharja Islamic Bank within two months of opening an account. The bank announced details of the winners in its X account.

The campaign is conducted every year with a view to encourage the customers to make savings, with a prize money of 20 million dirhams. The customers who deposit 10,000 dirhams are eligible to take part in the regular draw, with the winners eligible to secure cash rewards and luxury vehicles.

Vanga has expressed his happiness over the good fortune in bagging the jackpot. He says after becoming aware of the millionaire campaign I decided to win the booty on some day or the other.

He says the cash award will change his life. "With it I will get my family to the UAE." Vanga has thanked the bank.

Nationwide showdown looms over VB-G RAM G

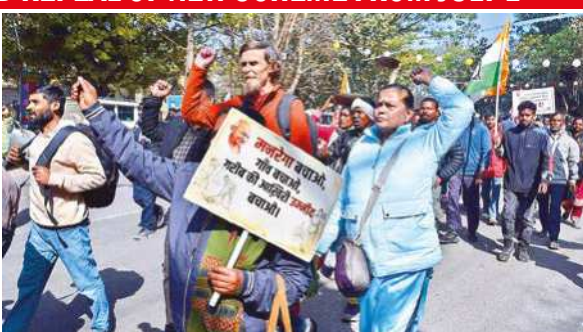
ACTIVISTS DEMAND REPEAL OF NEW SCHEME FROM JULY 1

NEW DELHI

DEMANDING the repeal of the proposed Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission - Gramin (VB-G RAM G), activists and workers' organisations on Wednesday announced protests against the new scheme from July 1.

Addressing a press conference here, members of the NREGA Sangharsh Morcha, agricultural workers' unions and labour rights groups claimed that an analysis of the government's own data showed the promised 125 days of employment under the proposed scheme was neither financially backed nor administratively feasible. The draft rules released by the Centre expose the "shrinking employment guarantee" under the scheme, they alleged, adding that "The draft rules continue the opaque erasure of MGNREGA."

They further alleged that the proposed framework centralises powers with the Centre while reducing



According to an analysis by the activists, no major state would be able to generate even half of the promised 125 days of employment per active job card in the proposed interim allocations

the effective employment guarantee available to rural workers. According to an analysis by the activists, no major state would be able to generate even half of the promised 125 days of employment per active job card in the proposed interim allocations. "This law destroys the spirit of the rural employment guarantee act... There is already a downward trend in employment generated," activist Nikhil Dey said.

"The burden will be on the states, and the push

would be not to provide employment because the states will have to bear the expenditure," he said. All India Agricultural Workers Union General Secretary B Venkat said they would hold protests at every village against the new scheme.

"From July 1, nationwide demonstrations would be held at the village, block, panchayat and ward level. We will also hold some protests in Delhi," he said, adding that 'jail bhara' campaigns would also be held along with the Samyukt

Kisan Morcha (SKM). They will also approach Opposition parties to raise their issues.

According to figures released by groups, Andhra Pradesh would be able to generate only about 42 person days per active job card under the proposed allocation, while Chhattisgarh would generate 39 person days, Bihar 31, Karnataka 26, Madhya Pradesh 26 and Uttar Pradesh 28. Maharashtra would be able to generate only about 14 person days per active job card, they claimed.

The groups said the gap between the promised employment guarantee and actual allocations translated into massive funding shortfalls for states.

Based on their calculations, Madhya Pradesh would require an additional Rs 31,013 crore to provide 125 days of employment per active job card, while Rajasthan would need Rs 27,212 crore, Uttar Pradesh Rs 27,987 crore, Maharashtra Rs 22,549 crore, Karnataka Rs 17,481 crore and Bihar Rs 15,939 crore.

TMC's Guha held, third ex-minister behind bars

KOLKATA: Udayan Guha, the former West Bengal Minister in charge of the North Bengal Development Department in the previous Mamata Banerjee-led cabinet, was arrested on Wednesday from his residence in Phoolbagan, Kolkata.

Although the officials are yet to specify the exact charges under which Guha was arrested, sources said police had been trying to track him for some time.

However, a source in the state police said the former minister is accused of involvement in post-poll violence in his native district of Cooch Behar following the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections, which marked the beginning of the third consecutive term of Mamata Banerjee as Chief Minister.

Guha's arrest has likely been in connection with those cases registered against him in relation to the 2021 post-poll violence.

He is the third minister in the previous Mamata Banerjee-led cabinet to be arrested since the new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government led by Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari took charge on May 9.

Former state Fire Services Minister Sujit Bose was the first member of the previ-



Udayan Guha

ous cabinet to be arrested last month by the officials of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for his alleged involvement in the multi-core municipalities' job case.

Then on June 9, Ujjal Biswas, the former Correctional Services Minister in the previous Mamata Banerjee-led cabinet, was arrested on charges of illegally hoarding relief material of the state government.

Now, on Wednesday, Udayan Guha is the third minister of the previous cabinet to be arrested.

Udayan Guha is the son of Late Kamal Guha, who was an All India Forward Bloc (AIFB) leader from Cooch Behar district and a member of the Left Front cabinet in West Bengal for over two decades.

Udayan started his legislative career with AIFB, when for the first time he got elected from Dinhatra Assembly constituency in Cooch Behar district in 2011.

Mamata's protest walk sees low turnout

KOLKATA: Trinamool Congress president and former West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday led a protest walk in central Kolkata against the recent hawkers' eviction drives carried out by the state administration across different parts of the state.

However, the event failed to make a mark because of fewer attendees. Although a public meeting was initially planned at the end of the protest walk from Esplanade to Subodh Mallick Square, both in central Kolkata, it was later cancelled.

The former Chief Minister left immediately after the protest walk ended.

Since the landslide defeat of Trinamool and Mamata Banerjee's personal defeat in the recently concluded West Bengal assembly elections, she has restricted her political programmes mainly to occasional video messages on social media.

After her nephew and Trinamool general secretary Abhishek Banerjee was attacked at Sonarpur in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal last month, she sat on a protest demonstration on June 2, which was her last public programme. On Wednesday, she led a protest walk against the hawkers' eviction. However, the event failed to attract a large number of attendees, with only a few front-ranking Trinamool leaders participating.

Major fire under control along Indo-Nepal border

KOLKATA: Quick response by personnel of the 41Bn Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB) prevented a fire at a market along the Indo-Nepal border from spreading and causing damage to life and property on the night of June 16.

A major fire broke out around 9.35 p.m. at the Bhatgaon Border Market, situated around 100 meters from the Bhatgaon company camp of the 41Bn SSB at Ranidanga in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal.

Personnel from the camp reacted immediately and rushed to the spot with fire extinguishers, sand buckets and water. They actively participated in firefighting operations, even after fire trucks arrived. The jawans helped in breaking open shutters and gates to allow firefighters access to the blaze.

Gujarat bus accident: Death toll touches seven

NEW DELHI/VADODARA: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday expressed condolences over the fatal luxury bus accident on the Vadodara-Jarod Road in Gujarat, as the death toll from the crash rose to seven and 28 people were injured, including two in critical condition.

In a post on the social media

platform X, HM Shah described the incident as "extremely tragic" and said his condolences were with the families of those who had lost their loved ones.

He said the local administration was providing medical facilities to the injured and prayed for their speedy recovery.

"The accident that occurred on the Vadodara-Jarod Road

in Gujarat is extremely tragic. My condolences are with those who have lost their loved ones in this accident. The local administration is providing medical facilities to the injured. I pray for the speedy recovery of those who have been injured," HM Shah wrote. The accident occurred at around 4 am. near Kotambi village when a luxury

bus travelling from Banswara in Rajasthan to Surat rammed into the rear of a truck parked on the roadside.

According to preliminary information, the truck had been halted while its driver was checking tyre pressure.

The collision crushed the front portion of the bus, trapping several passengers inside.

Local residents and passing motorists rushed to the scene before emergency services arrived and launched rescue operations.

Police, fire brigade personnel and teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) carried out a large-scale rescue effort. Firefighters used a JCB

machine to separate the two vehicles and cut through the mangled metal of the bus to extricate trapped passengers.

Most of the passengers travelling on the bus were from Rajasthan. The injured were shifted to Sir Sayajirao General (SSG) Hospital and private hospitals in Vadodara, where treatment is continuing.

Since we have concluded the mother of all trade deals, we have been moving fast to deliver on our commitments. We will sign the Free Trade Agreement by the end of the year and accelerate work on an investment agreement

-Ursula Von der Leyen, President, European Commission

BIZ BRIEFS

Dark Chocolate range by ITC

Fabelle Chocolates, ITC's homegrown luxury chocolate brand, unveiled its new 64 per cent Dark Chocolate range. Crafted with premium Ghana OriginCocoa, the range features various flavours including, Cranberry Noir, Orange Eclipse and No Added Sugar Dark Chocolate Bar. Subash Balar, Business Head - Confectionery, ITC Ltd, said: "The modern Indian consumer is rethinking indulgence, seeking greater transparency, balance, and choice without giving up on experience."

ABHFL expands presence in TG

Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited (ABHFL), a housing finance company, has expanded its footprint in Telangana with the launch of a new branch in Sangareddy. With this, ABHFL's total network in the state has increased to 10 branches. To mark the launch, the company is offering zero login fees along with spot loan sanctions of up to Rs50 lakh, valid from June 17 to 30.

GI ingredients by VAAA Super

Aetis Enterprises LLP has launched VAAA Super Foods, a premium food brand focused exclusively on GI-tagged (Geographical Indication) ingredients sourced from their native regions and offered in single-origin form. The brand has debuted with three products — Lakadong Turmeric Powder from Meghalaya, Byadagi Chilli Powder from Karnataka, and Gulbarga Toor Dal from Kalaburagi, Karnataka. The products are available through Amazon India and the company's website.

SBI Life rolls out campaign

SBI Life Insurance, an insurance company has released a new Digital Video Campaign (DVC) under its long-standing #Papa-HainNa digital initiative, to commemorate Father's Day. The new digital film is based on the story of a father who discovers that preparing a child for the future is not only about shielding them from every challenge, but about empowering them to navigate life on their own — letting them fall so they can learn to rise, confidently.

Vedanta Power debuts on D-St

Vedanta Power Limited (VPL), the power generation business of Vedanta Group, listed its shares on the BSE and NSE. The historic listing ceremony on 15th June was led by Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal, formally marking Vedanta Power Limited's debut on the Indian Stock Exchanges. Anil Agarwal, Chairman, Vedanta Group, said: "24 years ago, Vedanta became the first Indian company to list on the London Stock Exchange and went on to become a FTSE100 company."

Resilient India posts all-time high \$863 bn exports in FY26

Engineering goods, electronics, pharma and petroleum products powered record exports as SEZ expansion gathers pace

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S exports reached a record \$863 billion in FY2025-26, demonstrating resilience despite disruptions caused by the West Asia conflict and US tariffs, a senior Commerce Ministry official said on Wednesday.

Speaking at an outreach programme on the achievements of Gujarat's Special Economic Zones (SEZs), Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce Ajay Bhadoo said India's export ecosystem had remained strong through a challenging global environment.

"This has been a very difficult year, from US tariffs to the West Asia crisis, but India has proved its resilience," he said.

- Growth achieved despite US tariffs and West Asia conflict
- Exports have nearly doubled from \$441 billion in a decade
- Gujarat contributed around \$110 billion in exports



Bhadoo noted that India's total exports have nearly doubled over the past decade, rising from around \$441 billion to \$863 billion, driven by engineering goods, petroleum products, electronics, pharmaceuticals, gems and jewellery, and chemicals.

He said Gujarat contributed nearly \$110 billion to the country's exports and would continue to play a key role in export growth.

The government plans to

promote more SEZs across the country. Bhadoo highlighted the recent notification of Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Pvt Ltd's semiconductor SEZ at Dholera as part of this effort.

Kandla SEZ Zonal Development Commissioner Dnyaneshwar B. Patil said Gujarat's SEZs accounted for around 21 per cent of India's total SEZ exports. Investments and employment in the state's SEZs have also risen

significantly over the past decade, with jobs increasing to more than 2.22 lakh.

Patil said four semiconductor SEZs, including projects by Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing, Micron Technology, Kaynes Semicon and CG Semi Technologies, have been notified in Gujarat. He outlined a roadmap targeting 20 per cent annual export growth and 10 per cent annual employment growth from Gujarat's SEZs.

RBI removes rate caps on select NRI deposits till Sept 30

MUMBAI

THE Reserve Bank on Wednesday temporarily withdrew interest rate ceiling on fresh Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) deposits of 3-5 years' maturity till September 30, a move aimed at attracting foreign capital.

It has also temporarily withdrawn restriction on interest rates on Non-Resident External (NRE) deposits of 3 years and above tenors, including deposits that are renewed upon maturity, till September 30, 2026.

"The interest rate ceiling applicable to fresh FCNR(B) deposits mobilised by banks, including the deposits that are renewed upon maturity, for three years and above



-- up to and including five years tenors, is temporarily withdrawn with effect from June 17, 2026, for the period until September 30, 2026," the central bank said in a circular.

The relaxation came into effect from Wednesday.

An FCNR (B) deposit is a term deposit account meant for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to park overseas earnings in foreign currencies in India.

The notification also said interest rates on NRE/NRO

deposits should not be higher than those offered by the bank on comparable domestic rupee term deposits.

Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had announced a host of measures to attract foreign capital in the backdrop of rupee depreciating against the US dollar.

One of the measures was a facility of concessional forex swap for bearing the full hedging cost shall be provided till September 30, 2026 to AD banks for raising fresh 3-5-year FCNR(B) deposits. Separate notifications in this regard have also been issued for commercial banks, co-operative banks, regional rural banks, and small finance banks.

APITCO pacts with MSM Unify for skill development initiative

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

MSM Unify, an education and workforce platform of MSM Global Education Private Limited, has been empanelled by APITCO Limited as a training provider and consulting firm. The two years agreement, authorises MSM Global Education to perform assignments across skill development, capacity building, professional training, and educational consultancy in partnership with APITCO. The empanelment positions MSM Unify to participate in India's government-led skilling ecosystem.

Sanjay Laul, Founder, MSM Unify, said: "India's skilling challenge is not a government problem alone.

Domestic demand, reforms to cushion impact of rising crude prices: Crisil

Energy-intensive sectors may face higher costs, but broad-based growth drivers remain intact

NEW DELHI

India is expected to remain resilient despite elevated energy prices driven by the West Asia conflict, supported by strong economic fundamentals, structural reforms and healthy domestic demand, according to a report released on Wednesday.

A report by Crisil said that while a sustained energy shock could increase cost pressures across sectors and weigh on economic activity, India's growth outlook remains comparatively strong.

Although crude oil prices have moderated following the announcement of a memorandum of understanding between the US and Iran this week.

The report further stated that India's diversified economic structure and strong domestic demand could help cushion the impact of higher energy costs.

It identified that land transport, mining, agriculture, chemicals, rubber and plastic products among the sectors most directly exposed to higher energy prices.

These industries play a critical role in the economy and serve as key inputs for several downstream sectors.

In addition, pharmaceuticals, electronic products, processed food and metal products are likely to experience higher input costs if energy prices remain elevated.

However, sectors such as financial services, real estate and professional services face relatively limited direct exposure to energy related cost pressures despite accounting for a significant share of economic output.

Moreover, the report highlighted measures that could help mitigate the impact of rising energy prices.

Government support for fertiliser imports and domestic production, along with continued policy interventions, could help reduce pressure on the agriculture sector, it said. According to Crisil, India's economy has benefited significantly from structural reforms and stronger corporate balance sheets in recent years, which should provide a buffer against external shocks.

Centre garners ₹3,000 crore from GIC Re stake sale

NEW DELHI: THE government on Wednesday said it has sold a five per cent stake in the public sector reinsurance company, the General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC), with an enthusiastic response from investors to the offer for sale.

The stake sale is expected to garner about Rs 3,000 crore to the exchequer, taking the total proceeds from five PSU disinvestments so far in the current fiscal to around Rs 16,000 crore.

Non-retail investors oversubscribed the offer for sale (OFS) on Tuesday, putting in bids worth Rs 4,000 crore. The OFS opened for retail investors on Wednesday.

"Offer for Sale (OFS) in GIC Re closed with enthusiastic response from the in-



vestors. Government of India has divested 5 per cent of its stake in GIC Re with full subscription of base and green-shoe offer," Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Arunish Chawla said on X.

Through the two-day OFS at a floor price of Rs 352 per share, the government proposed to divest 2 per cent of equity holding in GIC, with an additional 3 per cent as a green shoe option, taking the total stake dilution to 5 per cent, equivalent to over 8.77 crore shares.

Tesla expands India footprint with Hyderabad experience centre

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

AMERICAN electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla has entered the Hyderabad market with the launch of its first Experience Centre in Telangana.

Located at Knowledge City in HITEC City, the facility showcases the Model Y Rear-Wheel Drive and Model Y Long Range variants, which are now available for booking through Tesla's official website. The company has also started delivery and after-sales services from its facility at Bollaram Industrial Area. Customers who place orders before June 30, 2026, will receive a complimentary Wall Connector.

With the Hyderabad launch, Tesla now operates Experience Centres in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi, Gurugram. These centres offer customers hands-on access to Tesla vehicles, product demonstrations and test-drive opportunities. Test drives for the Model Y can be scheduled through the Experience Centre or Tesla's customer support.

The 2026 Model Y Premi-

The experience centre at HITEC City showcases Model Y variants; deliveries to begin in July



um Rear-Wheel Drive offers seating for up to five passengers, 2,138 litres of storage space and power-folding seats. Powered by ultra-responsive motors, it accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in 5.9 seconds and delivers a WLTP-certified range of up to 500 km. Deliveries are expected to begin in July 2026.

Tesla also showcased the Model Y Long Range All-Wheel Drive SUV, designed as a family vehicle with a three-row, six-seat configuration. It offers a WLTP-certified driving range of up to 681 km, accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in 5.0 seconds and

BoB offers up to 6.25% interest on NRI FCNR(B) deposits

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

BANK of Baroda (BoB) has announced that it is offering higher interest rates of up to 6.25 per cent p.a. to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) under the 'bob Legend FCNR(B) Deposit Scheme'.

The bank is offering 6.25 per cent interest rates on US Dollar deposits, 4.75 per cent on British Pound Sterling (GBP) and Australian Dollar (AUD) deposits, 5.15 per cent p.a. on Canadian Dollar (CAD) deposits and 3.75 per cent p.a. on Euro (EUR) deposits.

Further, NRIs can benefit from the dual advantages of wealth creation and liquidity by availing of the hassle-free overdraft/loan facility against FCNR(B) deposits, providing enhanced financial flexibility while enabling them to maximise their returns.

Bullion loses sheen on weak global cues

NEW DELHI: Gold prices plunged by Rs 4,800 to Rs 1,54 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday, while silver dropped by Rs 5,300, as traders stayed away from precious metals amid a strong rupee and weak global trends.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated Rs 4,800 to Rs 1,54,400 per 10

grams. It had closed at Rs 1,59,200 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver also weakened sharply, falling by Rs 5,300 to Rs 2,55,400 per kilogram. The white metal had settled at Rs 2,60,700 per kg on Tuesday.

In the international markets, spot gold slipped marginally to trade at \$4,327.54 per ounce, while silver fell 0.18 per cent at \$69.89 per ounce.

Analysts said domestic

demand remained weak for the second straight day as investors chased higher returns amid firm equity markets. Gold prices declined on Wednesday as investors took a cautious approach ahead of several important US economic events, including the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy decision, Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

AI workforce tops 9.2 lakh as hiring priorities evolve

Demand shifts from experimentation to enterprise-wide implementation

MUMBAI

EMPLOYERS in India are now seeking deployment of artificial intelligence in governance and scaling up workflow, reflecting a shift in the hiring trend of AI talent from experimentation to execution, a report said.

Hiring demand has shifted decisively from AI experimentation to implementation, with employers increasingly seeking professionals who can deploy, manage, integrate and scale AI solutions across core business operations, according to staffing and workforce solutions company Qness Corp's India AI Workforce Analysis 2026 report.



The report, based on secondary data and 3.5 lakh job postings, found that India has around 9,20,000 AI professionals. Of them, 2,57,000 are in core AI roles and 6,63,000 in AI-embedded roles.

The report found differ-

ences in job descriptions. Global capability centres (GCCs) are hiring for reusable internal AI platforms, enterprise integration and governance, while IT services firms are recruiting to deliver AI across client pro-

grammes. Enterprises are hiring selectively to connect AI to finance, risk, operations, customer experience and employee systems, the report said. It said about 66-68 per cent of demand from 3.5 lakh active postings is for core AI roles, while 32-34 per cent is for AI-embedded roles.

However, this demand mix is the reverse of the supply base, where 72-74 per cent of the overall 9,20,000 workforce sits in AI-embedded roles and only 26-28 per cent are employed in core AI roles, said the report.

"What stands out in our analysis is the emergence of three distinct engines of AI growth. GCCs are building reusable AI platforms and

governance capabilities, IT Services are industrialising AI deployment at scale, and enterprises are embedding AI directly into business workflows and decision-making. Together, they are creating a new talent landscape where execution capability matters more than experimentation," Qness IT Staffing CEO Kapil Joshi said.

He said, more than 70 per cent of India's AI workforce now holds roles outside traditional AI specialists, while nearly one-third of all AI demand is emerging from business functions such as operations, customer service, marketing, finance, governance, and workforce management.

SpaceX overtakes Microsoft, becomes fourth-most valuable US company

NEW DELHI

SPACEX continued its stellar post-listing rally on Tuesday, overtaking Microsoft to become the fourth-largest company in the US by market capitalisation while announcing a \$60-billion all-stock acquisition of AI coding platform Cursor.

Shares of the Elon Musk-led company rose about 8 per cent in early trading, lifting its market value to nearly \$2.74 trillion. The gain pushed SpaceX ahead of Microsoft and further widened its lead over Amazon, valued at around \$2.65 trillion.

The latest rise extends a remarkable run since SpaceX's record-breaking stock mar-

ket debut on Friday. After soaring 20 per cent on its first full trading day, the stock has continued to attract strong investor interest, making it one of the most closely watched IPOs in recent years.

Investor enthusiasm has been driven by both SpaceX's core space and satellite businesses and its aggressive expansion into artificial intelligence. The acquisition of Cursor, a rapidly growing AI coding assistant valued at \$60 billion, marks one of the company's biggest AI bets. Cursor develops software that can autonomously write code and assist developers, competing with leading AI coding tools such as Claude Code and Codex.



'The Odyssey' India premiere

Christopher Nolan, Matt Damon and Tom Holland to visit Mumbai



India is set to witness a landmark cinematic event as acclaimed filmmaker Christopher Nolan will visit Mumbai this July for the Indian premiere of his highly anticipated

mythological action epic 'The Odyssey'. Joining the Academy Award-winning director will be Hollywood stars Matt Damon and Tom Holland, along with Oscar-winning producer Emma

Thomas. In a major recognition of the Indian market, Universal Pictures International has included Mumbai as an official stop on 'The Odyssey's' global premiere tour, alongside

prominent international cities such as London, Paris, and New York. Notably, this marks the first-ever Christopher Nolan film to have its premiere in India, underlining the growing significance of the country in the global entertainment landscape.

The grand premiere is scheduled to take place at PVR Icon IMAX, Phoenix Palladium, Mumbai. The film is slated for a worldwide theatrical release on July 17, with advance IMAX ticket bookings already open across India.

The Odyssey is being hailed as a technological milestone in filmmaking. Shot across multiple international locations, it is the first feature film in cinema history to be filmed entirely using IMAX cameras. The production utilizes newly developed IMAX film technology, promising an immersive large-screen experience for audiences worldwide.

Written and directed by Christopher Nolan, the film reimagines Homer's legendary tale of Odysseus and his decade-long journey home following the fall of Troy. The project boasts an impressive ensemble cast featuring Matt Damon, Tom Holland, Anne Hathaway, Robert Pattinson, Lupita Nyong'o, Samantha Morton, Zendaya, and Charlize Theron. Produced by Emma Thomas and Christopher Nolan under their Syncopy banner, The Odyssey is among the most anticipated global releases of the year.

The Mumbai premiere is expected to become one of the biggest Hollywood events ever hosted in India, bringing together international cinema icons and Indian movie enthusiasts on a historic occasion.



'The India Story' poster unveils Kajal Aggarwal as a fierce lawyer

The makers of 'The India Story' have released the film's first official poster, offering a powerful glimpse into a socially relevant courtroom drama centered on the alarming issue of food adulteration. Backed by Zee Studios in association with MIG Production & Studios, the film is gearing up for a worldwide theatrical release on July 24, 2026.

The newly unveiled poster features Kajal Aggarwal in the role of a determined lawyer, while Shreyas Talpade appears as a distressed father fighting for justice. A young girl portrayed as his daughter is also featured prominently, highlighting the emotional core of the narrative.

Adding to the intrigue, the poster showcases the iconic Bombay High Court in the backdrop, along with a pesticide cylinder placed inside a courtroom witness box. The imagery strongly hints at a legal battle linked to food contamination and its devastating impact on ordinary families.

Directed by Chettan DK and written and produced by Sagar B. Shinde, 'The India Story' aims to spotlight a major public health concern that affects millions but often receives limited attention. By combining emotional storytelling with legal drama, the film seeks to raise awareness about the dangers of food adulteration and its long-term consequences.

The project will be released in Hindi, Telugu, and Tamil, expanding its reach to audiences across the country. The film's technical crew includes cinematographer Nishant Bhagwat, music composer Mangesh Dhakde, editor Ashish Mhatre, lyricist Shakeel Azami, and sound designer Anmol Bhave.

With its socially relevant theme, compelling characters, and thought-provoking premise, 'The India Story' is emerging as one of the most anticipated issue-based dramas of 2026.

Hrithik Roshan cameo adds excitement to 'Alpha'

The newly released Alpha trailer has significantly raised expectations for the upcoming action thriller, offering audiences a more impactful glimpse into the film than its previously released teaser. With the movie scheduled to arrive in theatres on July 3, the latest promotional material has successfully reignited interest and generated fresh momentum ahead of release.

Following a teaser that received a mixed response from viewers, the makers appear to have struck the right chord with the trailer. Packed with high-octane action sequences, stylish visuals, and stronger emotional undertones, the trailer presents a much more compelling picture of what audiences can expect from the film.

Leading the charge is Alia Bhatt, who impresses in a powerful action-oriented role.

The actress showcases a confident and intense screen presence, highlighting a new dimension to her on-screen persona. Sharvari also leaves a strong impact, with her action scenes emerging as one of the major highlights of the trailer.

Adding further intrigue is Bobby Deol, whose character appears menacing and formidable. His commanding presence enhances the suspense surrounding the film's narrative. Veteran actor Anil Kapoor also plays a significant



role, bringing additional depth and gravitas to the ensemble cast.

One of the trailer's biggest crowd-pleasing moments is the tease of a special appearance by Hrithik Roshan. The brief glimpse of the superstar has already become a major talking point among fans, strengthening the connection between Alpha and the expanding YRF Spy Universe.

With expectations riding high, Alpha is considered one of the most important upcoming projects from Yash Raj Films. Industry observers believe the film's box-office performance could influence the future trajectory of the studio's ambitious spy franchise.

If the teaser left audiences wanting more, the trailer has successfully delivered the excitement and scale many were hoping for, setting the stage for a highly anticipated theatrical release.

Rakul Preet Singh focuses on growth, meaningful roles over stardom

Actress Rakul Preet Singh says her priority remains professional growth and meaningful storytelling as she continues to evolve in a career spanning multiple film industries. The actress recently opened up about her approach to acting, fame, and the growing influence of social media on performers.

According to Rakul, audience appreciation is the greatest reward for any actor, and she believes success should be measured by the impact of one's work rather than celebrity status. She emphasized that while stardom is gratifying, her primary focus has always been on delivering memorable performances and being

part of stories that resonate with viewers.

Reflecting on her journey in cinema, Rakul revealed that she consciously chooses projects that challenge her creatively. The actress said she does not want to be confined to a specific image or genre and instead looks for opportunities that help her discover new dimensions of her craft. She believes every film should contribute to her growth as an artist and offer valuable learning experiences.

The actress also shared her perspective on social media and its effect on actors. Rakul noted that when she entered the industry, social media was not as influential as it is today. However, she feels that the digital space has

become increasingly powerful, particularly in recent years.

While acknowledging that online opinions can affect newcomers, Rakul advised actors to remain focused on their work and avoid getting distracted by constant commentary on social platforms. She stressed that paying excessive attention to online chatter can be counterproductive and may negatively impact an artist's confidence and performance.

With a strong belief in authenticity and continuous learning, Rakul Preet Singh continues to shape her career around meaningful cinema and personal growth, reinforcing her position as one of the industry's versatile performers.

Pragya Jaiswal's photoshoot gains traction

Actress Pragya Jaiswal continues to command attention on social media despite not having a film release scheduled this year. The actress, known for her elegant fashion choices and strong online presence, has once again become the center of discussion with a stylish new photoshoot that is rapidly gaining traction among fans.

The latest photographs showcase Pragya in a contemporary fashion ensemble featuring a lace bralette paired with a light blue oversized shirt. Complementing the look are white denim shorts that have become a major talking point on social media. The relaxed styling and modern fashion approach have earned appreciation from followers, with many praising her effortless sense of style.

Captured beside a sunlit window, the photos highlight the actress's confidence and natural charm. Her minimal makeup, soft hairstyle, and understated accessories add to the overall appeal, creating a sophisticated yet relaxed look. The visuals reflect a blend of glamour and simplicity that has resonated strongly with fashion enthusiasts.

While fans continue to await updates regarding her upcoming film projects, Pragya has successfully remained in the spotlight through her active social media engagement. The actress frequently shares glimpses of her fashion shoots, travel experiences, and lifestyle moments, helping her maintain a strong connection with her audience.

Over the years, Pragya Jaiswal has built a reputation not only for her performances on screen but also for her evolving fashion choices. Her latest photoshoot further reinforces her status as one of the most stylish actresses in the industry.

Although there are no immediate movie releases on the horizon, the actress continues to make headlines through her fashion-forward appearances, proving that her popularity extends well beyond the silver screen.



'Cocktail 2' revives iconic song 'Tum Hi Ho Bandhu' with a new twist

As the release of Cocktail 2 draws closer, the makers have unveiled a refreshed version of the iconic chartbuster "Tum Hi Ho Bandhu," bringing back one of Bollywood's most-loved party anthems for a new generation of listeners. The recreated track is expected to play a key role in the film's music album and has already generated considerable excitement among fans.



Actor Shahid Kapoor, who headlines the sequel, shared the song on social media with a playful message announcing the film's arrival. The much-awaited romantic entertainer is scheduled for a theatrical release on June 19. Originally featured in the 2012 blockbuster Cocktail, "Tum Hi Ho Bandhu" became an instant sensation. The song was composed by Pritam, penned by Irshad Kamil, and sung by Kavita Seth and Neeraj Shridhar. It was picturized on Saif Ali Khan, Deepika Padukone, and Diana Penty. For the sequel, music producer Abhijit Vaghani has recreated the track with contemporary arrangements while preserving its original spirit. He revealed that the goal was to retain the song's timeless energy while introducing modern musical elements that appeal to today's audiences. The release of the revamped anthem follows the launch of other tracks from the film, including "Tujhko," "Vallah," "Mashooqa," and "Jab Talak," all of which have contributed to the growing buzz around the project. Serving as a spiritual successor to the original romantic drama, Cocktail 2 aims to recreate the magic of its predecessor while presenting a fresh story for audiences. With the return of "Tum Hi Ho Bandhu," the film has added another nostalgic element to its promotional campaign, further raising expectations ahead of its release.